

Until the End

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Summary: When he was 14, his home and his family was destroyed and he was forced to live in the land of his enemies, hiding his past and who he really is. At 25, he was summoned to the heart of the lion's den to work for the King. When he meets the Princess, his life will never be the same. Hiccup x Merida. Rated M after chapter 28

1. Legends

****New story! It's just the first chapter but I'm already in love with it. A lot of what happens in this story was inspired by a good friend of mine (her name shall be known as Pockets) and she is absolutely thrilled that I'm finally writing this. Do note that I'm going to take my time with this story because I want to do a REALLY good job with this. I can try to keep the updates at, maybe, once a week but I can't promise anything. With that all being said, enjoy the first chapter!****

****Chapter #1: Legends****

There's a legend here in Scotland, nearly as old as the land itself. It tells the story of a blacksmith, a stableman, a maid, and a princess. It's a story of love, hatred, fate, duty, life, and death. Not many know this legend and those few who do know don't know how it really went, but I do. I do know how it really went and that's the legend I'll be telling.

_Once, there was a kingdom called DunBroch. After a decade of war, the Kingdom was, at last, peaceful once again. It held on to the peace for 3 years but, sadly, it was not to last. For the past few weeks, a neighbouring clan had threatened DunBroch with war. The young Lord MacInroy had an army much larger than the combined strength of DunBroch, MacIntosh, MacGuffin, and Dingwall. The only way to avoid another war and a massacre was for the beautiful princess of DunBroch to marry the lord. Reluctantly, the 23-year-old princess had accepted the proposal but she only did it for the sake

of her people._

Enter a young man named Hiccup. Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, that's his full name. But in Scotland, that isn't his name. Whenever a Viking enters enemy lands for any reason, they change their names and hide their true origins. One might ask why they change their names. Little over 13 years ago, the Vikings lived peacefully among the Scots on the mainland but that all changed when war was declared between them. The Scots were victorious in the end and anyone left on the mainland that was a Viking or had Viking blood were slaughtered mercilessly. To this day, Vikings were still hunted down on the mainland. His name is now Hendry Gallach. No one on the mainland knows who he really is or what he experienced when he was a 14-year-old, not even the family that took him in when he was found at sea.

_Hiccup-I mean Hendry was 25 now. He had changed greatly over the years. He was once a talking fishbone that no one took seriously but as he grew older he had become taller and stronger. Many girls of his village could him very handsome and many would often giggle when he walked past them. What made him handsome was not just his height or muscle. He possessed auburn hair and mesmerizing forest-green eyes but there was one flaw in his otherwise perfect complexion. Hendry was a cripple; he was missing the lower part of his left __leg, just below the knee. One would often see him walking long distances with his crutch; strangers making fun of him but a stranger would always underestimate the young man. Hendry may have been a cripple but he was a skilled cripple. He worked as an apprentice blacksmith in his village; his skill was rivalled to none, his work was flawless. He had made himself several prosthetics to replace his missing leg but he usually only wore them when he was working. When asked why, he simply says, "Because they hurt more than the time I lost my leg"__

Over the years, his work had become widely famous. So famous in fact, that the young man was summoned by King Fergus to come and work at the smithy in the castle of DunBroch. This was a rare opportunity to be given to anyone, so Hendry accepted. He left for DunBroch shortly afterwards with his blacksmithing tools and his prosthetics safely in a bag and his crutch under his arm.

This is where the story begins.

And that was chapter #1. I tried to create this wise, old lady tone for this chapter but I probably failed doing that. I actually wrote this chapter when I was suffering a minor writer's block with **_Cursed**_**, so it's been sitting in my documents for quite some time. And speaking of **_**Cursed**_**, the sequel will be posted soon; I promise. Review, follow, favourite.**

2. Arrival at DunBroch

**I'm trying out a different type of writing with this story; point of view writing. I changed the rating to T because I was looking over my notes for this story and I realized it wasn't going to be as M as I thought it would be so I changed the rating. If something does come up, I'll just say it in the AN. Like for this chapter there will be some language and violence. Even though his name will be Hendry for the story, when notifying POV's, I'll still say Hiccup's POV. Quick

heads up, sorry of the bad description of the castle but please bear with me. And for every character, with the exception of Merida, it's AU. Enjoy!**

****Chapter #2: Arrival at DunBroch****

Hiccup's POV

I had left my village early this morning. The sun had already reached its highest peak in the sky and was slowly moving to the west but I still had little less than a mile to walk before I reached the castle. Traveling long distances when you're a cripple is no easy task. During the journey, I had already stopped a few times to have a quick rest. At one point I considered putting on a prosthetic but I quickly dismissed the thought; I'd be spending much more time trying to temporarily relieve the pain than actually nearing the castle.

I looked down the path and faintly in the distance I could make out the faint shape of a castle. Seeing the castle sent a wave of relief through me and I quickened my pace ever so slightly. Suddenly, I heard the faint beat of several horses behind me. I looked over my shoulder to see three horse riders, one leading and the other two following, move towards me at top speed. I could tell that they weren't going to move for me, so I moved as fast as I could to the side of the road but sadly I had misjudged the speed of the horses. When they were only a few meters away from me, I was nowhere the edge of the road and I felt a leg kick me hard in the back. I fell to the forest floor face first and heard the horses come to a stop. When I sat up, I saw the leader looking at me in disgust. The first thing I noticed wasn't his black hair, his blood-red tartan, his lean body, or his fine warhorse that clearly stated that he was a lord. The first thing I noticed about him was a scar over his right eye. It had dried blood on it, giving away that it was a recent wound, but surprisingly his eyeball looked unharmed. As I looked at him, I had a feeling in my gut that he was the one that had kicked me,

"Watch where you're walking, cripple!" He yelled at me. When I didn't reply, he rode closer towards me and spat on the ground. He turned his horse around and galloped towards the castle with the other riders following him close. I waited until the horsemen were out of sight before I attempted to get back on my foot. It took me at least 5 minutes but I got back up,

"The nobility has little respect for the common folk," I thought sourly as I continued down the path towards the castle.

* * *

><p>Still Hiccup's POV

There was still an hour until sunset when the outer wall came in sight. The castle truly was a building built for war. The outer wall was at least 3 meters thick and the gate doors were reinforced with steel. From the top of the wall was the perfect place for archers to shoot at the enemy. As I walked through the gate doors, I was given distasteful looks from the guards but luckily no insults. Behind the outer wall was the town, which usually was a lot more lively and busy but since it was nearing sunset everybody was either finishing up the day's work or at the local tavern, drinking and laughing to their heart's content. As I looked straight ahead of me, I saw the inner

wall, a structure just as tall as the outer but twice as thick. And behind all that was the massive castle, home of the King, the Queen, the Princess, and the three Princes. The castle also served as a temporary home for the Lords Dingwall, MacIntosh, MacGuffin, and the powerful and much hated Lord MacInroy.

As I kept walking through the market, I noticed a group of about 6 men leaning against a closed stall, all of them laughing at some unheard joke. All of them were wearing a similar blood-red tartan while only 4 of them wore a short-sleeved black shirt underneath it. One of the men noticed me and said something to the others. I ignored them and kept walking.

"Where are you off to, cripple?" I heard one of them yell but I ignored him and kept walking. How I wished they would let me be. I heard powerful paces head towards me and then a kick behind the knee of my good leg. I landed on my chest and I heard the group of men laughing at me, the one who kicked me, who was mostly likely the leader, laughed the loudest. I turned onto my back and tried to get my crutch but the leader took it and twirled it in his hand,

"Looking for this, cripple?" He asked in a mocking tone. I sat up and tried to grab my crutch but he quickly moved it out of my reach, letting out another laugh. The other men approached me and the leader threw the crutch aside, "Still being silent?" he sneered at me but I still remained silent. The leader looked at the other men, "Let's teach this bit of vermin some manners!" As soon as he finished, one of the men tore my bag from my shoulder and threw it off to the side. The leader stepped forward and kicked me hard on the side. I grunted loudly, causing them to laugh, and I rolled onto my unharmed side. Before I knew it, one of them kicked me hard in the stomach, pushing all the air out of my lungs and earning more laughter for the group. They kicked me anywhere their legs could reach; my back, my stomach, my lungs, anywhere. Luckily none of them kicked my head. With each impact I groaned loudly but I was determined not to scream. When I was given another kick, the leader yelled, "I think cripple has had enough!" I looked at his hideous face and he turned and left, the others following him closely. As I sat up, I thought I heard a snap of wood but I dismissed it as I finally began to feel the pain in my stomach and back.

"Are you alright?" I heard a voice ask. I looked to my left and saw a girl kneeling down beside me. She was probably around my age and I noticed immediately that she was very beautiful. She had golden blonde hair, which she wore in a braid that reached to about mid-back, large green eyes, peach skin, rosy cheeks, and a few freckles splattered on her face. She was wearing a full-length, simple light green dress with dirty white sleeves and a strap around her waist of the same white color. She quite a bit shorter than I was with a slender build. Before I could reply, the group came back but this time they went after the girl,

"Look at this, boys!" The leader yelled. He laughed and grabbed the girl by her shoulder, lifting her to her feet, "The Anglo-Saxon whore is back!" The leader laughed louder and threw her into the group of men. The girl screamed and began to struggle as the men began to touch her everywhere, particularly her breasts and in-between her legs.

"HEY!" Somebody yelled and before I knew it, a man was by the large group and took the girl from their clutches. "Keep your hands off of my wife!" he yelled at them, pointing a finger at them. The leader stepped forward and laughed,

"You call this bitch your wife?" He pointed at the girl, who was standing behind her rescuer. The two men gave each other looks that could kill and were about to engage when a castle guard ran to them and broke them up.

"That enough!" called the guard, stepping in-between the two men, "This is the 4th time in little over a week." He gave both men a stern look, "If you start again, I'm taking the matter to the king and he will deal with you. Now, disperse!" He waited until the group disappeared before leaving himself; only the leader remained. He looked at the man and the girl,

"Your kind doesn't belong here." He said in a threatening tone, "When my master is King, he will rid DunBroch and the rest of Scotland of the Jutes, the Angles, the Saxons, the Vikings and all that other vermin. Your King has started with the Vikings but my Lord will finish with your kind." He spat to the ground in front of them, walked around the two and walked by me. As he walked by me, he gave me one final kick in my stomach. I grunted when he kicked me and clutched my stomach. After the pain had diminished, I turned my attention back to the man and the girl. The man gave the girl a kiss on her forehead and embraced her; he hadn't noticed me.

"What were you thinking?" He asked her quietly, the worry easily heard; he spoke in an accent that wasn't Scottish. He let go of the embrace and looked at her, holding her head in his hands, "I told you to stay away from those men." The girl sighed,

"I'm sorry, Jack. But they were attacking this poor man," She said as turned and looked at me. It was then that I noticed that she was also speaking with an accent that wasn't Scottish. Jack followed her gaze and she looked back at him, "I couldn't stand by and do nothing." Jack gave her another kiss on her forehead then he walked to me and knelt down beside me, followed by the girl.

"Are you alright?" He asked me. I looked back at him and got a good look at his features for the first time. He had warm brown hair and dark amber eyes. He was tall, a little bit shorter than I am, and had a slim build. Like me, he wasn't wearing the traditional Scottish garb. Instead he was wearing a long-sleeved woolen shirt with an open brown vest over it, brown pants and leather boots. I nodded,

"I'm fine." I sat up and groaned loudly when pain shot through my back. It was then that I saw my crutch in two pieces. I groaned again when I saw the crutch, "Great." I muttered. I was about to ask to pass my bag when the girl was holding it to me. I grabbed to bag, rummaged through it and grabbed the prosthetic that hurt the least, a spring-loaded prosthetic. I tied it to my stump and stood up, wobbling slightly when pain shot through my leg. Both Jack and the girl immediately grabbed my arms when they saw me wobbling. "Thank you." I said with a nod. Jack smiled,

"I've never seen you here before." Jack commented, "What business do you have here?" I grabbed the letter from my bag and showed it. Jack took it and recognized the DunBroch symbol in the wax,

"I was summoned by the King." I explained,

"Why?" asked the girl who also looked at the letter before handing it back to me.

"He wants me to work in his smithy." I wasn't surprised when they looked at my leg then back at me,

"Forgive me but you don't look like much of a blacksmith to me." The girl said in a quiet voice. I couldn't help but chuckle,

"I get that a lot. Nobody expects the famous blacksmith Hendry Gallach to be a cripple."

"You're Hendry Gallach?" The girl asked with disbelief. I nodded,

"And you two are?" I asked. Jack was the first to reply,

"I'm Jackson Overland but everybody calls me Jack." He held out his hand to the girl and she took hold of it, smiling, "And this is my wife, Rapunzel." I smiled at both of them and slung my bag over my shoulder,

"Pleasure meeting you both and I am almost certain we will be seeing each other again soon." They both smiled and I turned around and walked away, each step sending a wave of pain through my stump, though the pain in my stomach and back had diminished.

"Wait!" I heard Rapunzel call. I turned around and saw her run towards me, "Do you have somewhere to sleep tonight?" She asked. I hadn't thought about that. I could try to find a bed in the tavern but I had very little money with me and sleeping in the streets was out of the question. Sighing, I shook my head. Rapunzel smiled a little, "You're welcome to stay with me and Jack if you want." I looked at Jack, who nodded in approval.

"I would like that very much" Rapunzel smiled brightly at my reply. Then Jack walked to her and gave her a short but passionate kiss,

"I have to go back to work. I'll see you tonight?" He asked and Rapunzel nodded. He smiled and gave her another short peck before heading towards the castle. Rapunzel watched Jack leave then started walking. When she noticed I wasn't following, she called out,

"Come on then! I'll show you our house." I walked to her as fast as I could without hurting my leg. We walked in silence for only a moment,

"What does Jack do?" I asked, my curiosity getting the better of me. Rapunzel looked over her shoulder at me and giggled,

"Thought you'd never ask." she said with a smile, "Jack's in charge of the King's stable."

"What does he do there?"

"What do you think? He makes sure that they are in good health, that they are fed, that the stables get cleaned, etc. He's also the only

one who Princess Merida trusts enough to take care of her horse for her."

"The princess? Jack knows the princess?" I asked with disbelief. That's something you don't hear everyday. Rapunzel nodded,

"I do too, you know."

"Jack introduced you?" She shook her head,

"No. I'm her personal maid; I take care of her daily needs and such." I was flabbergasted,

"You both work for royalty?" She giggled again,

"Yes, many people find it hard to believe." She stopped walking and pointed, "There's our house." I looked in the direction she was pointing. In the distance was decent sized wooden house with a small vegetable garden to the side and I could faintly hear the sound of chickens, a few sheep and a goat. From the chimney came a thin gray stream of smoke. The house was a lot larger than the house of my family back in my village but that was nothing new since those working for the king and queen earned more than a blacksmith does.

"That looks like a nice house." I commented while readjusting my bag. Rapunzel smiled and started towards the house, with me following closely behind. As we approached the house, the animals began to make loud noises as if trying to get our attention but Rapunzel just ignored them. She walked to the door and held it open for me. With a grateful nod I entered. The inside of the house wasn't much different from my house back in the village except that the room was larger and had the liberty of a fireplace. The houses of the common folk were very simple; everything was done in one room. Eating, sleeping, cooking, everything in one large room. Rapunzel quickly walked to the fireplace and threw a log into the fire causing a few sparks to fly into the room. As she meddled with the fire, I placed my bag on the large eating table, the contents clattering loudly as it hit the table and something lying beside the bag. I looked and saw a Scottish fiddle with the bow lying beside it.

"Do you play?" Rapunzel inquired suddenly when she noticed I was looking at it. I turned my attention to her and shook my head,

"No. My family doesn't have one." I took a quick glimpse at the fiddle then back at her, "Do you play?" She chuckled but shook her head,

"No, Jack does though. My music skills are with the pennywhistle." She sat down on one of the chairs by the table and motioned to the other chair; I sat quickly in the empty chair. We spent the rest of the time talking about pretty much everything in our life. During the chat Rapunzel began to cook for dinner and before I knew it Jack joined us. Dinner was nice; the potatoes mixed with kale didn't taste that bad. After dinner, Jack and Rapunzel made a make-shift bed in front of the fire place since they didn't have anything that I could use as a blanket. As I settled myself on the make-shift bed, Jack and Rapunzel were on the other side of the room getting ready to go to sleep. I watched the fire for a few minutes, the heat it was giving making my eyelids heavy. I closed my eyes and when I opened them,

Rapunzel was shaking my shoulder and telling me to wake up.

****I kinda put my own culture into this chapter a little bit. The food they ate for dinner is a Dutch dish called boerenkool (literal translation: farmer's kale or just kale). I recalled that the dish had been around since, probably, the Middle Ages (possibly earlier) and since I know little of the Scottish culture (besides kilts, bagpipes and haggis), I just decided to go with it. The reason I didn't choose haggis because I think that haggis is a bit too, for lack of a better word, extravagant for common folk and sheep are a source of wool and majority of clothing back then was made of wool so people would want to save the sheep for just that. I'm trying to keep this as historically accurate as possible but with some things I just have to give it a modern touch (especially when it comes to hygiene. People back then had no sense of hygiene, literally). I did do research on the Middle Ages (I'm also part of a medieval club), Scottish culture and such but Wikipedia and other websites can only take you so far. Oh well. I gonna stop talking now. Review, favourite, follow, pretty please with ice cream and a cherry on top?***

3. Meeting with the King

****Sorry it took so long but I experienced writer's block with this chapter. Luckily I got over it quickly but still. Next chapter should be up much faster. Nothing to notify in this chapter except some characters pwning others. Enjoy!***

****Chapter #3: Meeting with the King****

Rapunzel's POV

I woke that morning when a ray of sunlight shone into my eyes, causing me to cringe at the sudden brightness. After removing the arm that was around my waist, I rolled out of the bed and got dressed. I put on a similar dress as yesterday but instead of green, the dress was a lavender colour. Princess Merida had bought it for me when I first started working for her since colours like lavender and purple was very expensive. Normally a person from common background was not allowed to wear any shade of purple but Merida had given me permission to do so.

After putting the dress on and closing the back, I looked towards the fireplace and saw that Hendry was still asleep. Today would be the day he would meet with the king and right now the soot on his face made it look like he came from a pigsty; he had to look somewhat presentable or he'd never get the job. After grabbing a bucket, I went outside and walked to a nearby well in the middle of the town. A few people were already awake and starting the day and I felt a pang of fear when I saw the same group of men that attacked me yesterday wobbling out of a brothel. I averted my sight and began to walk faster. When I had reached the well, I dared a quick glimpse over my shoulder to see that the men were heading to the castle, the opposite direction from where I was. After filling the bucket with the cold water, I walked in a quickened pace back to the house and placed it on the table; Hendry could wash himself after he woke up. In the corner of my eye, I saw his bag and wondered if he had a clean tunic with him. I opened the bag, the contents clanging loudly, and below all the strange tools and odd looking contraptions, I found a neatly

folded green tunic along with a leather belt that clearly was new.

I placed the tunic and the belt beside the bucket and I heard my stomach growl; I never bothered to make food in the morning as I could easily eat something in the castle kitchens and today would probably be no exception. I ignored the growls for the moment and walked to Hendry, placing my hand on his muscular shoulder and shook him,

"Hendry, wake up!" He moved and blinked his eyes a few times when he looked up. He yawned and looked straight at me, "You have to get up." I whispered since Jack was still asleep and I didn't want to wake him up. Well, not yet anyway; he had to work too today. "You'll be meeting with the King today and you need to clean yourself up before you go." He groaned quietly and rubbed his eyes before nodding,

"Alright" He grumbled and lifted himself slowly into a sitting position. When he had stretched his arms, he got up and spotted the bucket and his clean tunic on the table. Slowly, he walked to the table and began to clean himself, starting with his face and his hands. I watched him for a few minutes as he washed the soot off his face and cleaned the dirt underneath his fingernails. He leaned forward, scooped up water in his cupped hands, and threw it over his hair in an attempt to clean it. When I saw he wasn't having much success, I got a large bowl, filled it with water and dumped it over his hair, some water seeping into his shirt and causing him to sputter loudly. He opened his mouth to complain but I shut him up as I began to run my fingers through his hair, hoping it would remove the dirt. When his hair looked clean enough, I threw a large rag over it and began to dry it off,

"I can do this myself you know." Hendry complained as he tried to take control of the rag. I eventually let go and let him do the rest. As he began to pull off his shirt to put on the clean tunic, I turned away from him and walked over to the still-sleeping Jack. I was surprised that he was still asleep, despite all the noise Hendry made when I cleaned his hair.

Waking Jack up was easy; just a little shook on his shoulder and, just to tease him, a blow into his ear and he was awake. He reluctantly got out of bed and started to get dressed. I left the house again and descended into the storage room; where Jack and I kept food among other necessities for winter time. It was hard to see in the dark room but I had been there so often that I easily found my way around and find I was looking for: feed for the animals. I re-emerged from the room and walked to the pens. I quickly fed the hungry animals and walked back to the main door to see Hendry and Jack standing by it, waiting for me. Jack was wearing the same white shirt and brown pants but replaced his brown vest with one that was dull blue.

During the rather short walk to the castle, we were all talking and laughing with each other. For me, it all ended too soon when a large door located to the side of the castle appeared in front of us. I pushed open the heavy oak door, which opened to the kitchens. In an instant the smell of food hit our nostrils. Jack and I walked in immediately, having been there so often, but Hendry stood in the doorway and looked around in awe; he'd probably never seen a kitchen this large before. I headed for a pot that was hanging over the fire

whilst Jack grabbed a loaf of freshly baked bread and an apple. He walked over to me and gave me kiss, causing some of the others in the kitchen to giggle. Encouraged by the giggles, he pulled me closer to him and deepened the kiss while I wrapped my arms around his neck. Māiri, a pretty 17-year-old girl with dull red hair and dark brown eyes, was the first to say something

"How did you ever get stuck with that guy?" She asked in an obvious teasing tone. I pulled away from the kiss, keeping my arms around him and shrugged my shoulders,

"I don't know." I smiled when he looked at me in surprise, "But I'm crazy about him." He smiled too and he gave me a tender peck. He placed the apple in his hand to his mouth and sunk his teeth into it, making him look like a pig and causing nearly everyone to laugh. Jack slowly walked backwards, towards the now empty doorway, making silly faces and then disappeared to the outside world.

Hendry had sat down at the large kitchen table and his head had turned red from laughter. As he finished his bouts of laughs, I had gotten two wooden bowls and filled them with the contents of the pot: porridge made from grounded oats and goat's milk. I placed the bowl in front of him and he immediately began to put spoonfuls in his mouth. I ate my porridge much slower than he did so he was done much faster than I was. As I neared the end of the meal, I felt a hand placing itself on my shoulder. I looked up and saw Māiri standing beside me,

"You best wake the princess," She said quietly. I nodded and got up. After telling Hendry where to go for his audience with the king, I ran up a staircase used specifically for servants to the upper levels, tying an apron around my waist. The staircase led to a small room with only a door. I walked through the door and entered a large hallway. I quickened pace, I walked to an oak door. I carefully turned the handle and entered the dark room. The only light came from the creaks of the still-closed shutters. On my tiptoe, I walked to the window and opened the shutters allowing light to flood into the room. When I heard a grunt and moan coming from the large bed, I couldn't help but smile. As headed to the large fireplace to throw in more wood, I heard a voice grunt,

"5 more minutes." I shook my head and walked over to the bed, sitting down beside a figure hidden beneath the blanket. I placed my hand on its shoulder and shook,

"Not today, my lady." I had grown accustomed to calling the princess by her name but calling her 'my lady' or something else was always the perfect way to annoy her. As expected she sat up, her red curls bouncing.

"Don't call me that, Rapunzel." I couldn't help but smile as I stood up,

"Maybe if you got up, I would." I walked to the princess' large closet and opened it, looking at the numerous dresses she owned. For a princess, she wore very simple dresses with some being so simple that she could be mistaken for a commoner but if you looked closely one could see that they were made from very uncommon cotton. After only seconds of browsing, I took out a dress I knew she liked: a traditional dark green dress with white slits on the elbows. I took

the dress out and was happy to see Merida out of her bed, already standing in her chemise. I helped her get the dress on and while closing the back of it, Merida talked to me,

"So, how are you and Jack?" She asked

"Very well." I replied as I pulled on the strings, trying not to pull them too tight, "We are hosting a very special guest." She looked over her shoulder, her hair bouncing into my face as it moved,

"Who?" she asked with the curiosity of a child,

"Hendry Gallach." She turned her head even more to catch my gaze with her cerulean eyes,

"Really?" She looked for wards again with her hands on her stomach, "What's he like?" I was quiet for a minute, not sure what to say. I couldn't just say that he was missing his leg; she would never believe that,

"He's not what you'd expect him to be." I said, finishing the back. Merida turned around and looked at me with a bright smile,

"I suppose I'll meet him sometime soon. He is going to work for my dad." I nodded,

"You do know you have a lesson today with your mother?" I asked, changing the subject. As expected, Merida let out a groan of frustration,

"Do you know about what?" I shook my head,

"No but don't worry about that now. First, you need to go down and eat breakfast with your family." Merida pouted in a teasing way and I laughed; it's not often that a maid tells a princess what to do. She let out a joyous laugh and turned on her heels and left the room; being anything but quiet. I kept laughing for a little while longer and then set to the task of making the bed and fulfilling my other duties.

* * *

><p>Merida's POV

I hate lessons, its official: I hate them. I'd much rather be riding Angus and firing arrows than being in a room with my mother teaching me how to walk properly. Today's lesson I found rather pointless: the Vikings. I mean, what's the point of learning about an enemy that is too weak to even return to the place they originated? The only thing about the Vikings that interests me is the legends about dragons; it is said that the Vikings used to fight dragons but if that's true nobody knows.

'Merida! Are you listening?!" My thoughts were interrupted by my mother's yells. In all honesty, I had barely listened to a word she said but I nodded. My mother looked at my with her usual look of disbelief. "Then what are the Viking tribes?" That was an easy question; I've had lessons about the Vikings before,

"Bashem Oiks, Bog-Burglars, Hysteria, Berserker, Outcasts, Meathead, Lava Louts, and Hairy Hooligans."

"Leaders and their fates." my mother commanded as she began to pace slowly back and forth, her hands behind her back and her eyes set on me. I took a deep breath and replied,

"Bashem Oiks: leader unknown. Bog-Burglars: Big-Boobied Bertha, killed in battle. Hysteria: leader unknown. Berserker: Dagur the Deranged, executed. Outcasts: Alvin the Treacherous, assassinated. Meathead: Mogadon, drowned. Lava Louts: leader unknown. Hairy Hooligans: Stoick the Vast, killed in battle."

"And did any of those leaders have any children?" I let out a groan,

"Why do I have to learn about the Vikings?" I whined. My mother stopped her pacing and gave me a stern look,

"The Vikings have been greatly weakened, yes, but they all wish us ill and they still pose a threat to the Kingdom. Now answer the question: the children of the chiefs and their fates." I let out a deep sigh and answered the question,

"Only two of the leaders had children. Bertha had a daughter named Cami-something-"

"Camicazi." My mother corrected. I rolled my eyes but luckily my mother didn't see it,

"And she was lost at sea. Stoick had a son and his name was-I believe- Hiccup." I looked at my mother and she nodded. With a feeling of relief, I kept talking, "No one is sure what happened to him but the general consent is that he's dead."

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

I was standing in a corner of the great hall, a large circular room where the King deals with kingdom business. The king, a big man with curly red hair wearing a long green gray and red tartan with a bear cloak, was sitting casually in his large throne and listening to a man's unheard problem. I had been waiting for a while now and part of me had begun to wonder if I would even get a chance today but ignored that part of me and waited patiently for who knew how long. I couldn't exactly say that my time waiting was uneventful but not the most pleasant.

A few hours ago, the King was interrupted from the man his was dealing with when some guards advanced towards him dragging a young woman with thick blonde braids with them. She was cursing in Norse; the language of the Vikings. Behind the woman, a Scottish man was being dragged and forced onto his knees in front of the King. The man was forced to confess that he had been hiding this woman for several months and the woman kept cursing the King in Norse. I hadn't spoken Norse in years but I could understand what she was saying. She cursed the Scots for destroying her home and killing her twin brother and cursed them for forcing her to live in hiding for 5 years. The Scottish man pleaded with the King for mercy but his pleas fell on

deaf ears and they were both sentenced to die tomorrow. Just before she dragged away, the woman spat at the King's feet.

That's what always happened to those who helped the Vikings; they we're helping an enemy of their land and that was treason and treason is punishable by death but despite the risks, there are, according to rumours, many who are hiding the Vikings and smuggling them out of DunBroch. Sadly, many get caught but there is one who the Scots could never get their hands on. One who had smuggled Vikings right under the noses of the King and his guards.

Aileen Fletcher. This woman never shows her face, never gets caught by the Scots, and never loses a Viking to them. Some say that she's just a myth but many others have claimed to have seen her; a young woman hidden behind a blue cloak. But despite the possibility of being myth, Aileen is wanted; dead or alive.

I snapped out of my thoughts when the King's voice boomed, asking if there were any other issues to be dealt with. This was my chance. I walked forward, the clinking of metal echoing through the room. I got down on my good leg, clearly showing my prosthetic, and bowed my head. The King was silent as his blue eyes studied me, his fingers playing with his rough red beard,

"Who are you?" he asked eventually. I took a brief glimpse at the large man and gulped quietly,

"Hendry Gallach, your Majesty." As I expected, he didn't say anything and I just knew that he, along with other person present, was looking at my prosthetic and stump,

"So you're the famous blacksmith?" He asked and replied with a nod, keeping my head bowed, "Anybody can say that." He said eventually, disbelief evident, "Can you prove it?" I nodded earnestly and grabbed the folded letter, which I was smart enough to bring. I held it out and the King's advisor took it from me and handed it to him. The King unfolded the letter and briefly looked at its content. He leaned towards his advisor and whispered, though I could easily hear it,

"I send for the best blacksmith in DunBroch and what do I get? A cripple." A pang of anger hit me when he said that. Here I am with a fake leg, kneeling in front of a man who also has a fake leg. I had to say something but if I did, it could cost me the job. But if I didn't say anything, there is no way I would walk out of here with a job. I had to say something, that way I'd at least have a chance,

"Forgive me, your majesty, but if I'm a cripple what does that make you?" Somebody behind me gasped and I felt all the eyes in the room looking at me and then at the King's peg leg. The King seemed flabbergasted by my statement and slouched into his throne, taking a look at his leg. The King's advisor leaned towards the King and whispered something into his ear, which was replied with a nod and he looked back at me,

"You proven your point but I'm not convinced that you're the blacksmith everybody speaks so highly of." He stood up and slowly walked towards me, his footsteps echoing through the silent room. He stopped in front of me and unsheathed his mighty sword, holding it in his hand and looking at the worn blade. After playing with the sword

for a few minutes he looked at me, "If you can make a new and better sword for me, I'll give you the job." There were whispers floating through the room as eyes stared at the king and back at me. I was about to reply when the King's advisor interrupted,

"May I speak, your Majesty?" He asked. The King looked at the old man and nodded, re-sheathing his sword,

"Your Majesty," the man started, "Hendry Gallach is said to be the best blacksmith in the land. Rumours go that he can complete a sword in less than two days, a skill mastered by few, and this man," he pointed at me, "Claims to be that blacksmith."

"What are you suggesting?" the King asked,

"If he is who he says he is than he should have no trouble making a sword before the celebration of your daughter's betrothal tomorrow." There were more whispers in the room as the King remained silent; his forehead frowned in deep thought. After a minute, he raised his large hand in the air and the room fell silent. He looked at me,

"Alright. If you can make a new and better sword for me before the end of the celebration tomorrow, I'll give you the job. Do you accept?" I remained silent; I could make a sword that fast, if my future wasn't hanging in the balance. I could deny the challenge and just go home but something was telling me to take the challenge. After contemplating my options, I took a deep breath and looked at the King,

"I accept."

****Told you there'd be some pwning. Review, follow, favourite.****

4. Swords and Secrets

****Quick update but a shorter chappie this time. Nothing to report except that some things about Jack and Rapunzel will be revealed.****

****coldblue (guest): I'm not going to reveal anything regarding Hiccup but what I can say is that dragons, currently, play no part in the story. I might be able to add something of them but it'll be brief. Sorry.****

****Guest: Maybeâ€¦.****

****Enjoy!****

****Chapter #4: Swords and Secrets****

Third Person POV

The sun was slowly starting to rise of the castle and the town. Far of in the distance, on a hill with a clear view of the castle, stood two cloaked figures. The shorter one of the two was wearing a blue cloak and the other a black cloak; their faces hidden by the hood. They were staring at the castle; they had both heard that the famous blacksmith had arrived and accepted a challenge the day before,

"It's hard to believe that a Scot has that great skill in blacksmithing. It's worthy of a Viking smith." A masculine voice from the black hood said. He was replied with a feminine scoff from the blue cloak,

"Indeed he does but he's not a Viking. No Viking can hide from the King; he will just look at them and he'll know they're a Viking. From hunting bears, the bastard has turned to hunting Vikings." The black hood turned to face the blue hood,

"Then it's a good thing he's never seen your face." The feminine voice chuckled,

"That's true. I heard from Sax and Ang a while ago that many believe that I'm just some myth. Just a story that's supposed to give hope." The remark caused a short chuckle to emerge from the black hood but that quickly faded to a serious tone,

"I spoke to Sax a few days ago. He's inquiring about the money; he won't be able to hide them much longer." Something below the blue cloak moved and from it came a feminine hand with a large pouch filled with coins. It stretched out towards the black cloak and a much larger hand emerged from the black, taking the pouch.

"Give this to Sax," The female instructed as the hand disappeared back to the cloak, "But tell him that he needs to wait for the new moon. At night, they can escape via the forest and meet at the checkpoints along the way. The money will take them as far as England with leftover to live off of for the next month." The black hood nodded and turned to leave when he heard a deep sigh. The black stopped and walked back to the blue, standing in front of it,

"Sometimes I wonder why we are even doing this." Two large hands from the black placed itself on the shoulders of the blue,

"The gods spared us for a reason and this is the reason. We both lost a lot during the war and-"

"But you still have your father." The blue retorted,

"Who's turning into a madman after years of claiming he's the rightful heir to the tribe since the real heir isn't alive." The blue hood looked up,

"Isn't? He is out there, Seoc!" She spat back, "They never found his body after the attack. He's out there!"

"Aileen," Seoc said sternly, squeezing her shoulders, "He was a runt, a weakling." One of the large hands dropped and motioned to both her and himself. "We barely survived the journey to the mainland. How in Thor's name could he have survived?" Aileen was silent for a while,

"I understand your thinking," She replied calmly, "But I still believe that he's out there." They stood silent for quite a while, watching the sun rise slowly over the castle,

"They caught another Viking yesterday." Seoc suddenly said quite

solemnly. Aileen nodded,

"I know." She said in the same solemn tone,

"How are we going to tell him that his twin is dead?" She looked at his covered face,

"Easy," was the reply, "We don't."

* * *

><p>Jack's POV

When I woke up that morning, I found the house empty. Hendry had been gone the whole night working on his sword and Rapunzel had already gone to the castle; she had to help the princess get ready for the celebration tonight. Tonight was also when Hendry had to get the sword done; if he didn't, he wouldn't have a job. I'll have to drop by the smithy some time today and see how he's coming along.

After I got up and dressed, I saw a large basket with a cloth covering its contents on the table. I lifted the cloth and saw several loaves of bread, a few bottles filled with water, cheese, several apples and a hump of folded brown cloth. I knew immediately what the basket was for and reached under the table. From an unseen hook, I grabbed a small key. With the basket in hand, I walked down into the storage room. At one end of the room, hidden in a corner, stood a large cabinet. I placed the basket onto one of the empty shelves and pushed the cabinet to the side, revealing a dark tunnel hidden behind it. After lighting a torch and retrieving the basket, I made my way down the tunnel. It didn't take long before I reached the end of the tunnel and faced an oak door. I placed the key into the lock, turned it and opened the door.

I entered a dark room that had very little light. The room hardly had any furniture; a table, a bed, a few chairs and a chest filled with who knew what. At the table sat a grownup man and across from him sat a little girl, about 5 years old, playing with a dragon doll. As soon as I had entered the room, the man looked up. When he realized it was me, he stood up and I handed the basket to him. He muttered what I suspected to be 'thank you' in Norse. He walked back and placed the basket on the table, removing the cloth and handing a loaf of bread to the girl. Hungrily, she grabbed it with her little hands. As he watched her eat, the man looked at her and gave a sad smile, facing the reality of their situation once more.

I didn't know a lot about this man and his daughter but what I did know was that they were Vikings; they were one of the lucky ones who survived the massacre after the war and one of many who wanted to leave Scotland. He spoke Gaelic and English but with a heavy Norse accent while the girl only spoke Norse. It was a miracle that they were found by the right people before they were discovered. Someone had talked to them that day and told them that Rapunzel and I would keep them safe until we could organize safe passage to either England or mainland Europe. Other than that the only thing I know about them are their names; the man's assumed name is Ruaridh and the girl's is Teãrlag but their real names are Tuffnut and Rannveig Thorston.

Rannveig had finished eating her bread and rummaged through the

basket and found the brown cloth. She looked at it and clearly looked confused. With a chuckle, I took it gently from her and wrapped the cloth around her, tying the front so it closed. Rannveig looked and saw that it was a cloak,

"Rapunzel made it for you." I explained even though I knew she couldn't understand me, "To keep you warm during the journey." Tuffnut translated and Rannveig smiled and threw her small arms around my neck, giggling. I wrapped my arms around her and gave her a few gentle pats on her back. When she pulled away, she said something to me; clearly a question. I looked at Tuffnut,

"She asks if you have children." He translated in heavily accented English. Yes, Rapunzel and I had a child; a daughter. Little Diana, an adorable girl with blonde hair and dark amber eyes. I remember that she looked just like her mother and I was certain she would grow into a beautiful woman but sadly that never happened. She was taken from us after two winters. We were devastated by her passing. We had wanted a child for a long time and Diana was the first one we could actually hold in our arms. Every time I looked at Rannveig, I see Diana; the two looked so similar with the same colour hair and eyes.

I let out a sigh and shook my head. Rannveig's expression turned to one of sympathy and she placed her small hand on top of mine. I smiled a little and moved my free hand on top of hers. She said something to me in Norse. I looked to Tuffnut for the translation,

"She says you'd be a wonderful father." I looked at the little girl again and I was certain that water collected at the bottom of my eyes,

"Thank you." I whispered. She gave me another smile and threw her arms around me once more. After what felt like an eternity, I let go of the little girl and made my way back to the heavy oak door. Before closing the door and locking it, I looked at them and gave them both a warm smile. I made my way back through the tunnel and pushed the cabinet back to its original spot. When I entered the home again, I saw a large pouch on the table that hadn't been there when I left. Beside the pouch was a note with symbols and scribbles that would have no meaning to most people. It said,

"Wait until the new moon."

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

It was about midday now and I couldn't be more proud of myself. The sword was finished. In my hand, I held a claymore, the blade so shiny it cast a reflection of light on the wall. A claymore is a two-handed Scottish sword. It is approximately 60 inches long and renowned for its fine balance. The only problem with a claymore is that it's heavy; a steel claymore could easily weigh 5.5 lbs and, because of its weight, only the strongest warriors could wield it. But lucky for me, the King is among the strongest in the kingdom.

With the sword being made in such a short amount of time, the blade was perhaps the best I had ever created. The quality of a sword is

criticized in 4 areas: hardness, strength, flexibility, and balance. A good sword has to be hard enough to hold an edge along a length which can range from 18 inches to more than 36 inches and at the same time be strong and flexible enough so that it can absorb massive shocks at just about any point along its length and not crack or break.

When it came to the metal, I've always preferred steel. Steel was strong, more durable, and had better wear resistance than any other metal available in DunBroch. Iron could be used too but it is harder to find here and it rusts too fast.

As I ran a cloth over the blade, adding to the shining, I ran the steps of making a sword in my head. Making a sword can be divided into six steps: forging, annealing, grinding, hardening, tempering, and lastly, completion.

Forging is when the bar of the metal used is heated in a forge and then hammered into shape. The sword is worked on in sections and is repeatedly hammered and heated until it becomes the desired shape.

Annealing softens the metal and makes it easier to grind into shape. The sword is heated and then set aside to cool. This step took a few hours and during those few hours, I used my time wisely by making the hilt of the sword.

After annealing, the metal is put in a grinder to work out the edge and give the sword a point. At this point, if desired, a smith could put any engravings into the blade but, as much as would have liked to do it, I didn't have the time to so. And although the sword has the right shape at this stage, it is not done; the metal is too soft.

The metal is then heated to a very high temperature and then quickly placed into a quenching tank, which basically is a tank full of water. The water cools the metal down rapidly and causes it to harden but it causes the metal to become brittle.

Tempering is very similar to the hardening stage except that the metal is heated to a lower temperature. At this stage, the skill and experience of the smith is invaluable as it takes a trained eye and hand to understand the properties of the metal; it should have a certain amount of flexibility and still retain its sharp edge.

After tempering, the blade is complete and the hilt is added. I ran the cloth once more over the blade and carefully placed the blade on the table. I grabbed my tunic that was lying carelessly by the anvil. As soon as I had it over my head, there was a knock at the door and I heard the door creak loudly,

"Hendry?" I heard a familiar voice say. I straightened out my tunic and turned around to see the familiar face of Jack,

"Can I help you, good sir?" I joked. He stared at me for a moment, his expression evident that he wasn't trying to laugh but it was in vain and he burst out laughing, which caused me to start laughing. It took a while before our bouts of laughter ended. When it finally did, I had water in my eyes and so did Jack. "What are you doing here Jack?"

"Came to check how the sword was coming along." He asked as I wiped my slightly blackened hands with a clean cloth. After most of the black was gone, put the cloth down,

"I have good news." I walked back to the table and carefully grabbed the completed claymore, one hand on the hilt and the other on the flat of the blade. Jack stared at the gleaming sword with wide eyes and then back at me,

"You're done?"

"Almost." He gave me an odd look as I placed the sword back on the table, "The only thing it needs is the approval of the King."

****Sorry to cut it off here but something very important is going to happen next chapter and I want to write it very detailed, which means it'll take a while. I'll give you guys a hint for next chapter: it involves Merida and Hiccup. You guys have no idea how much research went to Hiccup's blacksmithing section. It was Pockets that convinced me to write it out so you guys can thank her for that. Review, favourite, follow.****

5. The Celebration

****I am sick at home and I was bored out of my mind, so I decided to finish this. This is the longest chapter I have ever written for any of my fictions. My previous record was 3,516 (Chpt 3 of this story); this one is 4,901 (AN included). I've got some news, not bad but not good either. Updates will be coming much slower as I've recently started a new job and exams are fast approaching, soooooooo yeah. And don't expect any updates from May 21 to 24 as my school's production of ****_**Guys and Dolls**_**** goes up on those days and I'm in it. And before any of you ask, I don't have a role; I'm just a New Yorker. Many of you commented that this already really good even though it was only 4 chapters into the story. To that I say: You ain't seen nothing yet! And for those of you that asked questions, the answers are at the bottom but I think that everyone should read them 'cause they contain a lot of info regarding Toothless, the war, etc.****

****I'd like to give a shout out to LunaMoonlight100 for helping me with the conversation between Merida and Rapunzel. Thanks!****

****For any Dutchies out there: Leve de koning!****

****And lastly, this chapter contains violence and language. Enjoy!****

****Chapter #5: The Celebration****

Third Person POV

Heather walked with a bowl filled with hot water and a clean rag towards the woman sitting in the corner. The woman was staring absentmindedly to the floor and had not said a word since her arrival. The woman was blonde and her long hair was done up in two thick braids. She possessed a thin face and frame, and pale skin. As

Heather approached her, the only thing she saw was a broken woman with a broken body. The woman's arms and her cheeks were littered with bruises and fresh cuts, some of them still oozing blood. Her right knee was swollen, bloodied, bruised, and positioned at an odd angle. She wasn't wearing any shoes and her feet were covered in dirt and red and one foot was swollen and lightly bruised; clearly a sprain.

Heather pulled a chair closer to the woman and sat down quietly beside her; the woman didn't react and seemed unaware of Heather's presence. She dipped the rag into the hot water and gently grabbed the woman's arm. The woman flinched at Heather's touch and looked at her with fear in her eyes,

"It's alright." Heather whispered, "I'm not going to hurt you." The woman seemed to have understood Heather as she slowly moved her arm towards her and continued to stare at the floor. They sat in dead silence as Heather cleaned the wounds, afterwards wrapping them up to heal. She then got to work on the woman's cheeks, careful not to touch the bruises.

"What's your name?" Heather asked. The woman looked at her and instead of scared, she looked rather confused. Heather repeated the question but this time in Norse. The woman remained silent and Heather kept cleaning the wounds on the cheeks, believing that the woman will tell her her name when she was comfortable enough to do so. After that was done, she turned her attention to the injured knee. At the slightest touch, the woman would flinch and hiss. Heather apologized quietly and continued to examine it. Heather had a lot of experience with many different kinds of wounds and was often able to see what the full damage of a wound was. After a few more minutes of examining, Heather came to the conclusion that the woman's kneecap was shattered.

Heather stood up to get clean water and to clean the bloodied rag. After she was done both tasks, she turned her attention to the injured knee,

"Ruffnut." Heather looked at the woman and she looked back, pointing to herself. "Ruffnut." The woman repeated in a whisper. Heather smiled kindly and set to work on Ruffnut's knee. After long period of hisses and cries, Ruffnut's knee was bandaged and started the process of healing. As Heather walked away to dispose of the dirty water, she knew that the knee would never fully heal; Ruffnut will be stuck with a limp for the rest of her life.

After dumping the water, she heard footsteps in the distance but Heather took no notice of it; she and Ruffnut were safe and well hidden in an underground hideout deep in the forest of DunBroch. But this wasn't just a hideout, it was the hideout where Aileen Fletcher hid, planned and carried out her plans for Vikings. Heather looked at the stairs that led to the outside world and seconds later, a large figure in a black cloak appeared: Seoc. His black hood looked at Ruffnut,

"What's this?" Heather approached Seoc and stopped in front of him, blocking his path to Ruffnut.

"Seoc, she's an escapee. She escaped early in this morning." He looked at her and Heather took a step back when she looked at his

dark eyes. He was about to say something when he was interrupted by Aileen,

"She's the Viking they caught yesterday." She explained, "And I got her out with a little help."

"From who?" Seoc demanded

"Ang." She replied,

"Ang!" Seoc yelled, "Aileen, we've talked about this! We agreed that we wouldn't break into the dungeons and-"

"I never agreed to that!" Aileen retorted, "This whole operation is about getting stranded Vikings out of DunBroch, Seoc! Even if it means going into the lion's den to do so!" Though both their faces were covered by their hoods, Heather knew that they were giving each other looks that could kill, "And I have a good reason on why I broke in with Ang's help!" She pointed at Ruffnut, "That is the other Thorston twin. She-"

"And you replied this morning after I asked 'how are we going to tell him his twin is dead' with 'easy we don't'!"

"I didn't tell you because I knew you would try to interfere and every time you do, disaster follows!"

"That's not true!" Aileen was about to retort when an old man, who was also wearing a black cloak but with the hood down, stepped in. The old man was Seoc's father: Seac'saidh.

"Be quiet, both of you! Fighting will not solve anything!" His old voice boomed and the two ceased fighting. Aileen pointed a finger at Seoc,

"You say that it's not true. Prove it tonight by not screwing up!" She spat. She turned on her heels and disappeared into one of the rooms in the back, cursing loudly that Seoc was the biggest idiot she'd ever met.

* * *

><p>Rapunzel's POV

I emptied the last large bucket into the tub filled with water that smelled sweetly from all the perfumes but by now had turned cold. Merida hadn't returned yet from her free day and I was beginning to worry; she'd never been gone this long and if she didn't hurry, she'd not be ready in time for the celebration. I walked over to the fire and with make-shift tongs, I grabbed a hot stone from the fire and threw it into the water. The stone sizzled loudly as it fell to the bottom and steam wafted from the water. Dipping my hand into the water, I felt that the warmth had returned, if only a little.

The door opened and slammed shut and there stood Merida; her dress dirty and her mop of curls windblown and wilder than ever before. She took her bow from her shoulder and her quiver from her waist and placed them on the chest at the foot of her bed. She looked at me,

"I know what you are going to say and I'm sorry." I let out a sigh and shook my head as she turned around. I walked to her and undid the back. She took off her dirty dress and gave it to me. As I put the dress away in a laundry basket, Merida changed out of her chemise and put on a garment that she wore whenever she bathed; it was white, reached to about knee's length and had short sleeves. As I walked towards her, she put one leg into the bath, shrieked and immediately pulled it out,

"It's cold!" I looked at the water and back at her and just shrugged my shoulders,

"That's what you get for being late. Now get in!" She gave me a sneer and she got in; I was one of the few people she would actually listen to. She began to clean her feet, her face and anything that was dirty with a white cloth. I grabbed the bucket, filled it until it was about half-full and threw it over her head. Merida sputtered almost as loud as Hendry had when I gave him the same treatment the previous day. I grabbed the comb and began an attempt at brushing Merida's hair,

"OW!" She yelled as the comb came to a knot, "That hurt! Are you my friend or my mother!?"

"I'm sorry, Mer, but your hair got tangled more than usual," I apologized as I tried to go through her hair again, causing another shriek. I kept brushing, hardly any of the knots coming out and earning more shrieks from Merida, "I think that even a sword could not straighten this bush out." She turned around to look at me, her arm rested on the edge of the tub,

"That's what I like about my hair! It's free to be just the way it likes," Her expression changed to sorrow and she turned away from me.

"What's wrong?" I asked,

"Nothing." Merida lied.

"This about the betrothal, isn't it?" I had known her for so long that could always what was bothering her. I placed a hand on her shoulder,

"You know why I accepted! I had no other choice; he threatened us with war and massacre and the clans couldn't withstand him!" A sob escaped from Merida and I too felt some tears forming, "If they could, I never would have accepted." There was a long silence between us. I squeezed her shoulder and she turned around to look at me,

"I know it's going to be hard for you but know that I'll always be here for you when you need me. Always." I smiled and Merida did too. She threw her arms around me, giving me a very wet hug. "Let's get you ready." I said after a moment and Merida let go and nodded. She got out and I handed her the largest towel. I helped her dry off and then helped her with the difficult task of a corset. I knew she hated them a lot and, much to her mother's disapproval, I always tied it looser than normal. She'd usually complain until my ears fell off but today she kept silent. The dress she was to wear tonight her mother had chosen; it was a dark green dress made of silk with wide sleeves, a belt made of large gold rings, and a gold trim. When I was about

halfway done the back, the door opened and Queen Elinor entered. I curtsied and muttered 'your majesty'

"Leave us." the Queen commanded. I curtsied again and left the room, taking Merida's dirty dress with me. I looked at the small glass window that was in the door and saw the two women sitting opposite of each other. I couldn't hear what they were saying but Merida seemed to be sad. At one point, the Queen stood up and placed something on her daughter's head. When she stepped back, I saw a golden tiara decorated with gems of the same colour as her dress. I didn't know what happened next as I walked away to first the laundry room, to drop of the dress and then to the kitchens. The kitchen was busier than ever as they were still trying to get the feast ready for tonight. I saw MÃ;iri sitting at the table. She saw me, waving her hand, and I walked to join her when a wave of nausea hit me. I quickly ran outside, hand over my mouth, and vomiting the contents of my stomach onto the grass,

"Rapunzel! Are you alright!?" I felt MÃ;iri placing a hand on my back. When the vomiting stopped, I placed my hand on my belly and a bright smile appeared on my face.

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

It was about an hour into the celebration when I entered the meeting room with Jack, the sword tucked under my arm. A local leather worker had made a sheath for the sword that was decorated with the symbol of DunBroch; a sword pointing south in front of a Celtic knot. The room was filled with music, with more food than anyone could eat, and was overflowing with people from the other clans, all talking loudly. The clans had united against the Vikings and without their help, DunBroch would have fallen. Everywhere you looked you could see the dull red and green of MacIntosh, the green and gray of Dingwall, the green and light orange of MacGuffin, and the black and red of MacInroy. All the Lords and their sons were present. The sons had, years ago, tried to win the Princess' hand in the Games but through a series of events that involved the Queen being turned into a bear, the sons had been given the choice to choose their own wives rather than compete for a woman who would never love them. Although this decision was given to them 7 years ago, only Lord MacIntosh's son, Ewan, had gotten married. The other two, BhÃ tair MacGuffin and Cailean Dingwall, hadn't made a half-hearted attempt to find a wife.

When I looked through the crowd, I immediately noticed that the only Lord that wasn't present was William MacInroy, the Princess' betrothed; Jack had told me that the Lord would be escorting the Princess later tonight.

I turned my sight to the King, who was sitting lazily in his throne, listening to the music and taking the occasional chug from his pint while Queen Elinor was walking among the crowd welcoming guests and making sure the three teenage princes didn't cause any trouble. Hamish, Hubert and Harris had a growing reputation of troublemakers. From the time they could crawl, the triplets have been causing trouble and pranking anyone they could find, especially the maid Maudie, but since the bear incident 7 years ago, the princes had matured a little but their mischievous streak had hardly diminished.

I looked at Jack, who gave me nod. After taking in a deep breath, I walked through the crowd towards the King. As walked through the crowd, everyone that saw me stopped what they were doing and their gazes followed me. By the time I reached the King, all eyes were upon me. I got down on my good knee and held out the sword in both my hands,

"Your majesty, I have done what you asked." The King looked at me with surprise; he probably wasn't expecting me to show up. I held out his pint and a nearby servant took it from him. He stood up and walked towards me. He took the sword from my hands and unsheathed the sword. He examined every inch of it, trying to find a nonexistent flaw. He looked at me and gave the sword a large swing. I flinched when he swung at me and I shut my eyes. Just before the sword could slice through my neck, it stopped and the King let out a hearty laugh.

"This is a fine blade, lad!" He chuckled and all I replied with was a nervous smile. "He sheathed the sword again, held it out again, and another servant took it, nearly collapsing under the weight. "You held up your end of the bargain and now, I'll hold up mine." I looked up at him and he smiled, "The job is yours." I couldn't believe it! I got the job!

"Thank you, your Majesty." The King smiled again and waved his hand dismissively. I got up and walked back to Jack, who was smiling brightly and gave me a pat on my back. I was about to say something when someone loudly announced the arrival of Princess Merida and Lord MacInroy. All the eyes turned towards the stairs where first a man appeared. I looked at him and I was certain I had seen him before; his black hair and lean body looked so familiar. When I looked closer, I saw the scar over his right eye. He held out his right hand and behind him a smaller hand appeared and placed itself in it and from the shadows came the most beautiful woman I had ever seen.

They walked down the stairs and made their way towards the thrones but the whole time I kept my eyes on the Princess. Her red curls almost looked like fire though her cerulean eyes calmed that fire. She had a graceful round face and a slender neck and body. I had a weird feeling in my stomach as I watched her; it was something I'd never felt before but I had no idea what it was.

I snapped out of my trance when I saw a swish of black going around a corner in my peripheral vision. Curiosity getting the better of me, I looked around the corner to see a long empty hallway bathed in shadow but I was certain I saw something. I walked through the hallway slowly, the only sounds coming from my footsteps and breathing. I walked past a large tapestry that depicted a battle between the Scots and the Vikings. I took little notice of it and walked a few more paces. I stared in front of me, at the blackness, and I dismissed the swish of black from my mind. Just as I was about to turn around, something grabbed me roughly from behind, a large arm snaked across my chest, preventing an escape, and a knife pressed against my throat,

"Any last words, you filthy Scot!?" A voice whispered into my ear. I pulled at the arm that held me but it wouldn't budge. I strained my eyes to get a glimpse of my attacker and the only thing I saw was a black hood hiding his face. I didn't know who he was but I had a

sneaking suspicion of who he worked for,

"You work for Aileen Fletcher, don't you?" He pushed the knife harder to my throat but not enough to cut it. He leaned so close, I could feel his breath,

"What's it to you?" Not an exact answer but I took it as a 'yes',

"Tell her I'm on her side and tell her I said thank you." The man let out a heartless scoff,

"For what?" He pushed the knife even more, giving me a slight cut,

"For helping my people." The man didn't reply and suddenly he dropped the knife and let me go. I rubbed my throat, small lines of blood appearing on my hand. I looked at the man but the only thing I saw was his arm, the knife still in his hand,

"So the famous Scottish blacksmith is a Viking." I nodded as I continued to rub my throat. The man stared at me for a moment and then put his knife back in his unseen belt. "You do realize how lucky you are that you can show your face in public without fear of being discovered?" I stopped rubbing my throat and nodded. I was one of the lucky few Vikings that could hide in plain sight. It was very hard to do since you would have to be able to speak English or Gaelic without a trace of a Norse accent and you had to have a more Scottish look than a Viking. When I was younger, I was the opposite of what the ideal Viking was; I was small, frail, weak. It wasn't until I lived on the mainland that I started to grow but I grew the Scottish way. There was an uncomfortable silence between us for a few minutes, sounds of the celebration faint in the distance,

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Seoc Johnston." He replied; I had expected his real name. We were both Vikings so we could tell each other who we really were,

"And your real name?" Seoc looked over his shoulder down the hallway that led back to the celebration.

"You should probably head back. Sooner or later, the King will be missing his precious blacksmith." He walked around me as I looked down the hallway,

"Tell me your real name first." I got no reply. I looked over my shoulder; Seoc was gone. I slowly walked back to the celebration but my mind was wandering; I had just met another Viking but he refused to give me his real name. Maybe it was better that I didn't know who he really was; he could have been a Berserker or an Outcast. During the war, all the Viking tribes had reluctantly united against the Scots but as soon as it was over, the old rivalries re-emerged in any Vikings that were left. My tribe, the Hairy Hooligans, were sworn enemies of the Outcasts while we had a very strained alliance with the Berserkers. The only allies the Hooligans had were the Bog-Burglars but even that alliance was strained.

A figure suddenly appeared in front of me, snapping me out of my thoughts just in time to avoid a collision. I began to mutter

apologies as the figure turned around and shock hit me when I found myself staring Princess Merida. She was staring at me, her expression unreadable, and I bowed my head, muttered another apology and walked away. I took a quick glimpse over my shoulder to see her still staring at me with those beautiful cerulean eyes. The same weird feeling from before re-emerged when I saw her stare and looked away. I walked back to my spot beside Jack; Rapunzel had joined him,

"Are you alright, Hendry?" she asked, "Your face is completely red." I placed my hands on my cheeks, only to feel that they were burning. I didn't reply and looked at the crowd, who were creating a large circle in the middle to allow dancing. I saw MacInroy hold out his hand to the Princess, who took it, and leading her to the dance floor. The music started and the two began to dance. As much as I liked dancing, the dancing of the court was a bit painful to watch; it was so regal, so stiff, I could hardly see any joy in the faces of the dancers that soon joined. None of the women smiled and all the men kept a serious expression. When the dance was finished after an eternity, it was received by a polite clapping, not by the boisterous cheers and laughter like the common folk did at the end of a dance. The clapping finished and all the dancers got ready for the next dance when suddenly the women started screaming and MacInroy took several stumbling steps. I walked through the crowd until I reached the edge and then I saw the arrow that was lodged into the shoulder of the man.

A figure walked through the crowd, pushing anybody in its way. It emerged from the crowd and all watched the blue-cloaked figure walk toward the wounded Lord with a bow in her hand. Everyone recognized her immediately and what she had intended. The King walked towards her when she stopped and held his new sword to her throat. If Aileen was scared, nobody knew but she didn't flinch when the King threatened her.

"Remove your hood." He ordered but she didn't move an inch and though her face was cast in shadow, we all felt her eyes piercing our very souls. The King looked at a guard standing behind Aileen and cocked his head; a silent order. The guard approached Aileen with an outstretched hand and when his fingers almost touched the fabric, Aileen swiftly grabbed his arm. A loud crack and a scream echoed through the room and Aileen bolted, revealing the fur-lined Viking boots she was wearing. The King began to yell orders and he, along with a few guards, ran after her.

* * *

><p>Aileen's POV

I ran as fast I as possibly could. I eventually reached the end of the hallway; the only thing visible was a large open window. I leaned over the edge, looking at a drop that was at least 30m. I heard the King and his guards approaching roars and I got up onto the ledge and faced the hallway, shadows of my pursuers getting larger and larger.

They appeared at the end of the hallway; the guards were panting but the King was alert and looking to get a glimpse of my face,

"We have her now." I heard him mutter and he approached me with his new sword in hand. I watched him approach me and when he was less

than 3 meters away, I took a step back. The wind blew around me, lifting my cloak, until I hit something; something soft. I popped out of the hay piled on a hay cart and looked at the driver. A grin spread across my face when I saw the familiar dark green cloak,

"Perfect timing, Fionntan, as always." He looked over his shoulder and gave a slight nod,

"Well?" Fionntan asked as I climbed to the empty spot beside him,

"I missed. I hit the fucking bastard in his shoulder!" I looked over my shoulder to see the King in the window, waving his fist and cursing me and condemning me. "We won't get another chance like this anytime soon. Maybe when the bitch is married to him, we'll get another chance." Fionntan snapped the reins, urging the horse to go faster. It obeyed and the hay cart sped into the forest and soon disappeared out of sight.

****Fun Fact:** Throwing hot stones into water (or visa versa) was a Viking practice. Unlike most people during the Middle Ages, cleanliness and looking good was important to the Vikings.**

****They've seen each other!** I had little inspiration for that part so please bear with me. And we've finally met MacInroy; trust me, he's very important. ******

****Answers****

****Flowerpower71:** OK, I have to admit that I love Toothless. The reason I didn't add him in this story is because Hiccup came to Scotland BEFORE he met Toothless and I've read a lot of fictions where Hiccup takes Merida on a ride and personally I think the idea has been worn to death and I wanted Hiccup to try to capture Merida's heart without the dragon.**

****Guest:** In this story, Hiccup has never met Toothless. Why the Berkians moved to the mainland is for several reasons. If you've seen the movie and/or the TV series, you'll probably notice that Berk is not that big and problems like overpopulation and food shortage would eventually happen. Before the war with the Scots, the Berkians and other Vikings settled on the mainland because it was more bountiful there and it took care of the overpopulation problem. It was also the closest to their original homes. During the war, Berk and all the other tribes were attacked, forcing the Vikings to flee and with limited supplies, the furthest many could go was the mainland. Berk was definitely worst off during the war because they had to deal with the Scots AND the dragons. ******

****T-Biggz:** Mor'du won't appear in the story because this takes place AFTER the events of ****_**Brave **_****so Mor'du has been dead for a long time. I haven't decided with Camicazi. If she is alive, she'd probably appear in the last few chapters or get mentioned a couple times.**

****And before any of you asks why the Vikings didn't just return to where they originated.** After the war, many were stuck on the mainland because their original homes were destroyed beyond repair and many didn't speak English or Gaelic (so they couldn't communicate

properly) and then there was the massacre, which forced many to go into hiding; some hiding in plain sight (like Hiccup) while others disappeared from the face of the earth (like Tuffnut and Rannveig), only to re-emerge when they were either discovered or they could leave Scotland for England or mainland Europe (Which was very expensive during the Middle Ages). Review, favourite, follow.**

6. The Wisps

Ok, I know that a lot of you are disappointed that Toothless won't make an appearance but there's more to it beside me wanting Hiccup to win Merida's heart without the dragon. Toothless' protective side would really mess up some important events in later chapters which will, in turn, mess up the overall outcome of the story. I'm trying to find a way to incorporate Toothless into the story without messing up the plot. I have only one idea so far but it's very brief and he's more a symbol/sign than an actual character. If I can't think of anything else, would you guys be fine with that? Some of you are probably wondering how Hiccup lost his leg if he's never fought the Red/Green Death. Don't worry, it'll be revealed within the next few chapters but I'm curious to know what you guys think happened let me know in a review or something. **For those of you who don't know where Hiccup has seen MacInroy before, reread Chapter 2 (It's before the first line break) If you still don't know, feel free to ask. Answers are at the bottom again.**

**Guys and Dolls ****was a lot of fun and I'm sad it's over but being home at midnight and getting up again at 6:30 for a whole week does take its toll.**

Nothing to report except a (somewhat) cliff-hanger.

Chapter #6: The Wisps

Merida's POV

It had been two days since the failed assassination attempt on William's life. Many said that he must have been protected by an angel for the arrow wasn't poisoned and, after its removal, it was discovered that the arrow only caused a flesh wound.

My mother had told me to stay by his side while he recovered, to "make a good impression." I had refused several times but she eventually convinced me by repeating his threat. I knew my mom didn't agree with this marriage; when the threat came she had given me the choice to refuse but warned me about the consequences of refusing. I love my people and I had already learned my lesson of wanting my freedom over anything else and that nearly ended in disaster. It took a while for the reality of the consequences to sink in and when they finally did, I accepted.

I had hardly left the chair and had spent my time doing the things I detested; reading, playing soft music, and worst of all, sewing. I dreaded doing all the lady-like things but I had to keep him happy. He liked his women to be silent and obedient; he couldn't stand the idea of a woman carrying weapons or wanting something like choosing their own husband. The only reason I did the things I detesting is because, if I couldn't keep him happy, he would go through with his threat. William had a reputation of going through with his threats

without hesitation.

During his stay so far, he's been anything but a gentleman, trying to win me like I was some prize. He'd be bragging about all the battles he's won, all the dangerous foes he's faced but never bothered asking me a single question. He only knew me as "Princess Merida", the creation of my mom, but not the real Merida.

I can't say I hate him but I don't like him either. He was something that his clan referred to as "pure-blooded, pure-minded." For them, "pure-blooded" means Scottish without a trace of any other ancestry and "pure-minded" meant believing with all your heart that anybody that isn't a "pure-blood" had to be exterminated but pure-minded didn't only refer to anyone non-Scottish. The MacInroy's would make fun and abuse anyone that wasn't "normal." They particularly loved making fun of cripples; I was curious to know how he would react when he learned that dad had employed a cripple to work for him.

He knew I wasn't "pure-minded"; my best friend was Anglo-Saxon and her husband was just a Saxon, though Vikings were a different story; I had grown up being taught to hate them but after the war, my hatred diminished to pity when I watched Viking after Viking being slaughtered without mercy. For me, the slaughter had gone too far for too long and I was so close to convincing my dad to stop it when William came by and changed his mind.

I looked at the window to the outside world; the sun was shining brightly and there were hardly any clouds in the sky; usually on days like these I'd be in the forest with Angus. I looked at William and then back at the window; he had already woken up a few times and he knew that I was there. I'm sure he wouldn't mind if I was gone for a little while. I got up and ran out the door to my room. I threw my cloak around me and I snatched up my bow and quiver, slinging them over my shoulder as I ran through the halls, out of the castle, towards the stables. Jack could see me coming from a mile and stepped out of the way of Angus' stall.

I got onto Angus and we galloped at full speed into the forest, the wind blowing in my hair. I would have lifted my arms into the air if Angus didn't stop on a dime. It took all my strength to prevent myself to fall off. I looked at what had stopped him and saw the familiar blue flame; a Wisp! When it knew I saw it, a whole trail of them appeared, leading me down a familiar path, towards the river where my mom and I had spent time together when she was a bear.

Without thinking for a second, I snapped the reins and urged Angus to follow the trail of Wisps. I was a fairly short journey and soon I was back at the familiar river; it seemed almost yesterday when mom and I were here. I looked at the salmon splashing in the river and my stomach grumbled loudly. I had no idea why the Wisps led me here but I might as well eat something.

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

It was my second day as the blacksmith of the King and I already had a lot to do. There were jobs that still had to be done that my predecessor had failed to complete; I had armour to make and repair,

Lord MacIntosh had requested a new sword, several spear heads, and the list just kept going.

I pushed the door to the smithy open and walked to the forge, poking the coals causing a few sparks and several flames to start. When a decent flame was burning, I walked towards the table and began to take my tunic off; for some unknown reason, I've always felt more comfortable working without a tunic.

"Hello Hendry." I let out a yell, quickly pulling down my tunic and turned my gaze to a dark corner. Aileen walked out of the shadows, her face still hidden by the hood. "I have to say I was quite surprised to hear from Seoc that you were a Viking; I was convinced that you weren't." I honestly had no idea how to reply to that so I stood there quietly, half staring at the floor and at her. There was a long and uncomfortable silence between for who knew how long

"May I ask what you are doing here?" I eventually said, running my hand through my hair. Aileen slowly started to walk towards me and under her cloak I could see the glint of metal that belonged to a two-sided axe.

"I've seen plenty of Vikings during my time but you're the only one that doesn't seem eager to leave."

"I see no need to leave," I replied coldly, "I've been hiding for 11 years and-"

"And Dagur the Deranged had been hiding for just as long when he was discovered."

"But I'm not deranged." I let out a chuckle at my joke but Aileen didn't seem amused,

"Is this some kind of a joke to you because it isn't a joke, Hendry!? In this world, it's not leave or hide. It's leave or die. My advice: leave, while you still can. I can arrange safe passage to England or mainland Europe for you and you're already at a safe house so I don't need to take care of that."

"Safe house?" Aileen's hood nodded,

"Places where Vikings in hiding live." She explained. I was already at a safe house? I have high doubts that the castle was a safe house but that would mean-

"Jack and Rapunzel are hiding Vikings?" Aileen nodded again,

"You're in safe hands, Hendry. All you need to do is say yes." There was another silence between us as I thought about it. I let out a long and deep sigh when I made my decision,

"Give me a few days. I need to think about it and I need to ask the Allfather for guidance but I doubt I'll get any."

"Why?" I looked at Aileen in surprise. Wasn't it obvious?

"There's no shrine where I can pray or make offerings."

"There actually is." She walked to the open window and pointed. I

looked at where she was pointing: the forest, "Deep in the forest, there's an abandoned shrine under a sacred tree. The Scots have long forgotten about it so you can pray there in peace."

* * *

><p>Still Hiccup's POV

I stood up with a sigh and started the long walk back to the castle; the shrine was about a mile from the castle.

After searching in the forest for nearly an hour, I had found the shrine under an old and large tree; the wooden fence marking its boundaries rotting away. Before entering the shrine, I dropped my small knife on the ground; no weapons are allowed on sacred grounds. The shrine was definitely abandoned a long time ago since the wooden statues of Odin, Thor, Freya, and Forseti had started to rot and crack and the grass was undisturbed by footsteps.

All over the shrine one could see offerings to the gods. There were offerings of stones with runes lying neatly in rows, a horse's skull impaled on a large stick, a tablet of stone with runic inscriptions, and there was a large stone where animal sacrifices were done; the stone didn't have a single spot of blood. I didn't know how long I had been praying but it was a while because the sun was starting to set when I was finished. Before I left, I placed my offering on the ground: a stone with a rune on it. It wasn't a lot but it was better than nothing; now I had a chance that Odin would answer my prayers.

I continued to walk through the forest, not caring where I was heading. Some part of me didn't want to go to England but another part wanted to go. Staying here would be dangerous but I had hid in public for a good 11 years-I couldn't see why I couldn't hold it out for another 11 years if not the rest of my life and I've build my life here and going to England would mean starting from scratch and I would leave my family behind. Since coming to the mainland, they have treated me with more respect and love than all the people on Berk, my original home. I couldn't just leave them but by staying I was also endangering them.

But if I went to England, I wouldn't have to hide anymore. I am so tired of hiding; hiding my past and who I really am. Sure, Vikings weren't treated much better there than here in DunBroch and the rest of Scotland but at least they weren't thrown into the dungeon on sight and killed the next morning. And if I left, I wouldn't be endangering my family anymore. But if I did go, I would have to deal with insults and stereotype all over again and-

A large stone suddenly appeared in front of me; if I had been stuck in my thoughts only a second longer, I would have collided with the rock. I walked around it and found myself in a circle of large upright stones. I made a full turn and the one stone that caught my eyes was the one that was split in half. Below it was the remnants of a carcass; a bear's. The sight of it made me a little uneasy and I turned the other way. What I didn't expect to see was a small, floating blue flame. It was looking at me, whispering something soft and melodious and inaudible, its little hand urging me to come closer. Hesitantly, I reached out my hand and slowly approached it; closer and closer. I expected to feel something hot or something like

fire but when my fingers almost brushed the little flame, it disappeared into nothingness. I looked around me, expecting the flame to be somewhere but there was nothing. I started to walk when I heard the whispering again. I spun around and saw the blue flame in almost the same spot from where it had disappeared. Behind it another appeared and then another and another and another until a whole trail of little blue flame was visible, leading up a hill and deeper into the forest, all of them urging me to follow the trail.

Against my better judgement, I followed the trail of blue. Whenever I approached a flame, it disappeared but re-appeared at the end of the line. I followed the trail up a hill covered by many trees. I looked up and saw one last flame at the very top. The hill was so steep that I had to use low-lying branches to help me up. The last flame disappeared and I was alone. I could hear water nearby and, grabbing another branches, I peered over the edge of the hill. I saw a river and a figure with a dark blue cloak with the hood up by the edge, a bow and arrow in their hand. It shot the arrow and a salmon was hit. The figure took out its catch and brought it to the blazing fire nearby. An unexpected blast of wind came and blew the hood off, revealing the mass of red curls underneath it; the princess!

I leaned further over the hill to get a better look, not noticing the amount of pressure I was putting on the branch. I leaned further and the branch snapped loudly. I hid behind the hill, my fingers clinging tightly to the grass and hearing an arrow being notched into the bow. I couldn't see where it was aiming but I knew that it was aimed in my direction.

****And before any of you complain about Merida's portrayal in this chapter, she is forced to do lady-like things (if I haven't made it obvious enough)****

******EDIT: Realized that the years Hiccup had spent in hiding were wrong so I corrected it. It's 11 years NOT 8******

****Answers****

****Guest: I think this chapter answered most of your questions but I might as well say that MacInroy is anything but a Viking. And I'm not going to reveal anything about any of the character living under an assumed name but I'll be putting in hints to who they really are.****

****T-Biggz: As you can see I am using the wisps. I've already removed so much from HTTYD and Brave in this story that I had to keep something from the original movies.****

****Review, favourite, follow****

7. Fated Meeting

****I'm sorry this took so long but my life has been a bit hectic the last few weeks. Work, writer's block and exams are going to start soon but I only have to write exams for 2 subjects, so yeah. When I finally did have it done, I couldn't update because I couldn't get to the page where you post new chapters. Another reason why it took so long was because I wanted this chapter to be perfect. This chapter is**

crucial to the story and I probably failed at it.**

For those of who don't know yet, I figured out a way to incorporate Toothless into this story. I apologize for the false chapter I had posted but I was so happy and excited that I couldn't wait. But Toothless wasn't the only character I figured out how to incorporate. Don't bother asking who because I won't say anything unless you bribe me with food. :D

Any questions you guys posted in the false chapter are answered below unless I already answered in a PM

**Another shout-out to LunaMoonlight100 for helping me with the conversation between Merida and Hiccup. Without her help, this chapter would have taken a lot longer to update. :) **

Nothing to report this time. Enjoy

Chapter #7: Fated Meeting

Merida's POV

Faster than a flash, I notched an arrow into my bow and aimed at where the snap came from,

"Who's there!?" I yelled loudly but the only reply I got was the chirping of birds, the rustle of leaves, and distant fluttering of wings. I knew somebody was there; these trees were stronger than the gates of DunBroch and would not break easily,

"I know someone's there and I'm warning you, I'm armed!" I yelled even louder, "So you better step out or you will get hurt!" But there was still no reply and with nothing to aim at, I hit the next logical thing. I released the arrow and it buried itself in the tree with the snapped branch. I quickly notched another arrow and waited.

The first thing that appeared was auburn hair. Very slowly, a man emerged from behind the hill; I was certain I had seen him before but where? He walked towards me with his hands somewhat in the air. He didn't look dangerous as he was only carrying a small knife but his muscles betrayed that he was strong. I pulled the string my bow more and aimed for him. He looked scared,

"Your Highness, please forgive me for startling you." He said in a shaky voice. He didn't even sound dangerous! But I couldn't be too careful. I pulled the string even more,

"Who are you?" I demanded, "Are you one of the spies for MacInroy?!" William always had his pawns following me and keeping an eye on me for him. I've tried to tell him I didn't like it but he ignored me; it was hard to get some time to myself. He hastily shook his head,

"Thank God not, your Highness! I'm the new blacksmith of your father, Hendry Gallach" Hendry Gallach! That was more than enough evidence that he wasn't lying; Hendry was from the clan DunBroch not clan MacInroy. I looked down and immediately saw his fake leg. Rapunzel wasn't lying; he definitely wasn't what you'd expect.

"Oh," I lowered my bow and relaxed the string, "Never would've

thought that the famous blacksmith would be a cripple, no offence." He didn't react to the cripple comment; he must have heard it so often. When he saw I had lowered my bow, his hand fell to his sides,

"None taken." There was an awkward silence between us. Every time we made eye contact, he'd look away, rubbing his arm nervously and his cheeks turning a shade of red, "Um, may I be so bold to ask, your Highness, but...what are you doing in a place like this?"

"That's none of your business, Hendry" That came out sounding angry, not at all what it sounded like in my mind. I probably scared him a little because he took a small step back and it didn't help that I still had a bow with a notched arrow in my hand, "I could ask the same question, though. What would a crippled blacksmith be doing deep in the forests of DunBroch? And here of all places?" He ran his fingers through his hair,

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you." He said, looking at my bow. I took the arrow from the string and placed it back in my quiver. After slinging the bow over my shoulder, I sat down on a rock and crossed my arms,

"Try me." Rolling his eyes and sighing, Hendry sat down in the grass.

"I saw a little blue floating flame that wasâ€|calling to me and it would always disappear when I wanted to reach for it." A floating blue flame? But-but that means he sawâ€|. I gasped,

"You saw a Wisp!?"

"A what?" He asked, his expression confused. How could he not know? The stories about wisps were pretty well-known

"A Wisp!" His expression didn't change, "The Will 'o' Wisp?" I tried but still no change. I sighed, "They lead you to your fate." I explained, "I saw them too when I was riding with Angus! Where did you see them?" He twisted his upper body around and pointed up the hill from which he had emerged,

"Up and over that hill," He turned back to face me, "It led me here, your Highness." Why does he keep calling me that? It's not like were anywhere public or something,

"Call me Merida. 'Your Highness' is my mother." He nodded,

"Alright. Merida."

"But if you saw a Wisp then you must have been chosen for something by them." Hendry looked at me as if I was crazy to believe something like that,

I don't believe in those kinds of things, your H- Merida." He averted eyes away from me to the ground, "My fate is to be a blacksmith for the King of DunBroch, that's all." There was another silence, even more awkward than the one before. Well, it wasn't a complete silence. The wind was blowing, the stream flowing, and birds whistling.

"I-I apologize once more for startling you but," He stood up and gave

a small bow, "I must go back now. Lots of weapons to make and insults to take." With that he walked away towards the trees,

"Hey!" I called out. He stopped and turned around, "If you have a chance to change your fate, would you?" He started playing nervously with his hands and shrugged his shoulders,

"I-I don't know. I'm perfectly happy with what I am now." I sighed and gave him a disbelieved look. Sure, he was successful but was he truly happy? I decided not to push him too much,

"The wisps lead you to the fate that you're meant for. Don't turn your back on it."

"Have you ever turned your back on your fate?" That was a very good question.

_Every time I think on my future marriage I'm turning my back. Please don't make the same mistake, Hendry... _That's what I really wanted to say but I didn't. Instead,

"Not yet."

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

_"Hendry?" _Something was echoing my name but I wasn't listening. I never daydream or get stuck in deep thought but today I couldn't stop. It got so distracting that I stopped work early and just wasted time at the house.

"Hendry!" I snapped out of my daydream to find Rapunzel and Jack staring at me. Then I realized that I had been playing with my stew like a child. "Are you alright?" she asked with genuine concern. Of course I was alright unless constant day dreaming didn't qualify as "alright." Maybe something was wrong with me; I had been daydreaming since my encounter with Merida It felt weird calling her by her name; I shouldn't even be doing it but I did. I sighed,

"I saw Princess Merida in the forest today." Upon hearing that, Jack let out a small chuckle and looked at me,

"Well, I'm not surprised. She goes there quite often" He explained, "Its the only place she has to herself." Rapunzel smiled as I popped some bread into my mouth. I had barely swallowed when she asked,

"And?"

"And what?"

"What did you think of her?" She asked, hardly able to hide her excitement,

"She's..." what was she? Beautiful, wild, short-tempered, unprincess-like? Even though I've talked to her once, I knew she was more than just one thing, "She's not what I expected."

* * *

><p>Merida's POV

"_Merida?_"_My mother was talking to me again but I wasn't listening. Instead, I was staring at my haggis, poking it with a knife and acting like my brothers did when they were younger. After I got back from the forest, I had been daydreaming and thinking about my encounter with Hendry. I don't know what it was but I had a strange feeling about him, the kind of feeling somebody feels when one thinks that a friend is hiding something. But he wasn't a friend and yet he's was perhaps the kindest man I've met since William came. "Merida!" My mom's shout shook me out of the daydream,

"Yes?" I looked at my mom, placing my elbow on the table and leaning my hand against my head.

"Stop playing with your haggis." I stared back at my plate and poked the haggis again, "What's wrong, Merida? You've been acting like this since-"

"I came back from the forest." I interrupted, poking the haggis more and earning a disapproving look, "I know." Another poke and my haggis split open, revealing its many contents. With a sigh, I dropped my knife, not feeling hungry anymore,

"What's on your mind, wee darling?" Dad asked before taking a large chug of ale,

"Nothing." I lied. He gave me the 'look'. "I met Hendry Gallach today. In the forest." Dad let out a hearty laugh,

"He's a fine lad, isn't he?" He chortled before taking a large bite out of a huge chunk of meat.

"He's not what I expected."

They've finally talked to each other. I'll try to have the next chapter up faster but I have to study so I can't promise anything. Review, favourite, follow.

Answers

Guest: No. I might as well say that Dagur is a guaranteed dead because he was publicly executed at some point before the story. I'll also add that Hiccup saw MacInroy in chapter 2: Arrival in DunBroch; he was the horse rider that kicked Hiccup.

8. Friends and Family

One exam down and another update! In this chapter, a new character will be introduced and Jack's past, how he met Rapunzel, and why they are in Scotland is revealed. I'm letting you guys know way ahead of time but I'm going on vacation for the whole month of July so writing during that time will be minimal to none, so don't expect any updates for ANY of my stories during that month. Sorry for any inconveniences.

**Nothing to report this chapter. Enjoy! **

****Chapter #8: Family and Friends****

The following week passed quietly with little event. William MacInroy left DunBroch and headed for his own castle a few kilometres north for some 'business'. What kind of business? Merida couldn't care less; she finally had some freedom to do what she wanted but little did she know that William's right hand man, Artair, was keeping an eye on her from the shadows.

The moon Jack and Rapunzel had been anticipating would arrive soon: the new moon. Soon, Tuffnut and Rannveig would be making their escape and Rapunzel had come up with the perfect cover: a gathering filled with music, dancing, and drink. Rapunzel knew that many would come even a few guards would leave their posts to join, leaving the streets empty. At some point during the gathering, when all the guests had their share of strong alcohol, Jack would leave and escort Tuffnut and Rannveig to the forest to meet with Aileen. From there, the two would make their way to England and then- Whoa! I'm getting ahead of myself; the new moon would not come from another three days.

Where was I? Oh, yes: during the week, Merida had ordered brand new arrows but something was wrong with them. Though it was only a small problem, she knew who she wanted to fix it.

* * *

><p>Merida's POV

I was walking as causally as I could towards the smithy. The tips of the arrows I had ordered weren't sharp. I could easily do it myself but some part of me wanted to talk to Hendry again and I was certain he knew how to sharpen arrow. How much different could it be from sharpening a sword? When I arrived, I saw that the door was closed. I took hold of the door handle and tried to turn it but it couldn't; the door was locked.

I let out a quiet grunt of frustration; where could he be? I knocked almost furiously but there was no reply. I paced back into the direction I came, my mind contemplating what I should do to pass the time. I had no lessons today and there was no William around to stop me from doing what I wanted. That combination could mean only one thing: do the archery course with Angus! Before running to the stables, I went to my room to replace the new arrows with the old ones. As soon as that was done, I sped out of the castle for another day of pure freedom

* * *

><p>Still Merida's POV

The sound of soft cooing and the familiar blue flame appearing out of nowhere had stopped me right in the middle of the course. The instant I had stopped, the single Wisp became a long trail of little blue flame. I kicked Angus lightly and we slowly trotted down the trail. Once again, the Wisps led me down a familiar path. Once again, they were leading me to the river.

When the river came in sight, I first thought that it was deserted but then I saw someone sitting on a rock facing the river, a notebook

in his right hand and a charcoal pen in his left, scribbling on the parchment; a bag was lying beside the rock. I knew who it was; that auburn hair was not hard to recognize,

"Hendry?" I asked quietly, not expecting him to shoot up from the rock and closing the notebook with a slap. He spun around and gave a very awkward bow, nearly tripping on his fake leg.

"You Highness." I heard him mutter. Rolling my eyes, I jumped off of Angus and let him graze in the grass,

"How many times do I have to ask you to call me Merida?" I asked with a tone that was a mix of annoyance and a chuckle. Straightening himself, Hendry just shrugged his shoulders. I looked at the notebook he had in his hand, the pen marking the page he was on, "Can I see that?" I asked, motioning to the notebook. Hendry looked at it and slowly handed it to me. I sat down in the grass.

I opened the notebook and saw a half drawn charcoal picture of the river and the surrounding forest, "Are you some kind of an artist?" I inquired, turning the next page. On it was a very well drawn picture of the castle "These are rather good." I turned the next page to see a group of men and women dancing; it seemed so realistic I could almost hear the music playing, "They're very good, actually." I turned on more page and saw a village situated in front of a large rolling hill and surrounded by a small forest, "Hendry, this is incredible." I looked at him and he shrugged his shoulders,

"A lot of people back in my village didn't seem to think so."

"Really?" He carefully took the notebook from my hands and closed it,

"That's why I only draw when I'm on my own with nobody to make fun of me."

I looked at him and smiled. Right at that moment I realized how Hendry and I both did the things we love when nobody's watching. Him with his drawings and me with my archery. We had more in common than I dared thought.

* * *

><p>Rapunzel's POV

The kitchen was quieter than usual. Lunch had finished only 10 minutes earlier and most of the cooks and maids had left either to check up on family or spend a few spare minutes in town. It was that time of year again when merchants and traders from the far corners of the kingdom would come to the castle and try to sell their wares but I decided not to go. There was really one merchant I would want to see and he wasn't coming; he'd always send a message a few days prior to his arrival and I've gotten nothing.

With a sigh, I looked into the fire; I had finished all my other jobs earlier and now I was relaxing in front of the fire. It was nice and quiet here, the only sounds coming from the crackling fire and the few servants that decided to stay behind. The peace was abruptly disrupted when MÃ;iri came bursting through the door,

"Rapunzel!" she screamed as she ran to me,

"What is it?" I asked quickly. Was something wrong? Did something happen to Jack? Did-?

"He's here!" she panted,

"What!?" He's here!? I shot up from my chair and grabbed her shoulders, "Where!?" After a few more pants, she pointed to the door,

"In his usual spot in the market place." That's all I needed to know. Without saying another word, I ran out the door as fast as I could, towards the marketplace. He's here! I couldn't believe it! He did come! But why didn't he tell me he was coming? Did he want to surprise me that much?

The marketplace was much busier than usual; everybody wanted to see if they could rack up a good deal on some quality English wool or a rare trinket that the trader claimed that it was from mainland Europe. Everywhere, merchant and traders were yelling loudly their wares and prices while musicians played on the streets trying to earn a pretty coin from a passing music lover. But I ignored it all; I was too focused on finding him. With the thick crowd it was hard to see anything. I looked around and found a sturdy unused box standing by a stall. I climbed up and looked in all directions and there to my left, I saw it. In a less crowded area of the market, stood a stall with many brightly dyed wool spread out on the table, a tall man with short black hair and-though it was too far to see-light blue eyes. He was wearing a white shirt, a gray vest and black pants. He was talking to a costumer with a light blue fabric in their hand and a pouch of money in the other.

"Onceler!" I yelled out loudly after the costumer left, waving my hands high in the air. I wasn't sure if he heard me but he started to turn his head left and right before his sight fell on me. A bright smile came on his distant face and he ran away from the stall. At the same time, I jumped down and ran to him. We both ran and we didn't slow down when we came into each others sights. We crashed into each other and embraced tightly, "I thought you weren't coming!" I squealed loudly, the people around us watching,

"Did you honestly think I would miss an opportunity to see my baby sister?" He chuckled and gave a peck on my cheek before letting me go,

"You do have a point," I agreed, "How's father?"

"The same: old, grumpy, and still mad at you."

"Like I'd expect anything different." I joked.

Besides my father, Onceler was the only family I had. My mother had died giving birth to me and Onceler's mother, my stepmother, had been dead for a few years now. I haven't spoken to my father in 5 years and I don't blame him for being so silent. Any father would be furious to hear from his stepson that his only daughter ran away to marry someone they deemed unsuitable. My father did not approve of me marrying Jack; he had always called him a "pick-pocketing beggar".

Prior to meeting me, Jack had a hard life. He and his sister were beggared orphans; not a single orphanage would take the two in. Jack was forced to steal food and money for them to survive the harsh life of the streets. During their wanderings in Northern England, Jack managed to get a spot for his sister in a convent but sadly, the convent refused to let Jack live there as the Mother Superior feared that Jack would run away with one of the precious relics or the silver. Reluctantly, he left his sister there with the hope that she'd live a better life than before and a promise that he'd come back for her.

Somehow Jack stumbled into the place where I lived, a town about 5 km south of the rubble wall separating England from Scotland. There he put the promise in motion. He managed to get a low-paying job in the stables. In the weeks that followed, he learned everything he now knows about horses but, thought his boss saw potential, his low wage stayed the same. Several weeks later, Jack was caught stealing bread; the harvest that year had been bad and the price of bread had gone up, much higher than Jack could afford with his low wage-even my family, despite a successful wool business, were reluctant to buy it. I was nearby when the guards came to arrest him. I remember Jack was screaming at the top of his lungs that he was so hungry, hoping that his pleas would spark some pity in the guards. But there was none. Onceler was with me that day and he tried to pull me away, saying there was nothing I could do but I ignored him and, by some miracle from God, the guards stopped when I told them to. They must've recognized me as the "beloved only daughter of the wealthy wool merchant" and when Onceler joined me, they were more than willing to let Jack go.

After a heated argument with my father, Jack could stay, though only for a few weeks. Day turned into weeks, weeks turned into months, and by the time the first year passed, Jack was pretty much part of the family, though my father didn't trust him. As the time passed, Jack and I became close friends and slowly I fell in love with him. One night, Jack and my father had an argument, the biggest they'd ever had, and Jack stormed out of the house and headed to the stables with the intention of leaving. I found him before he could mount his horse. He confessed his feelings for me and asked me to marry him. I had said yes without a second thought. Our first kiss happened right there and I remember only one thing about it: that it was perfect.

Moments later, Onceler entered the stable to get Melvin, his mule. I opened my mouth to explain but he held up his hand, saying that he had heard the argument between father and Jack. Just before he left with Melvin, he said,

"Head north to Scotland. Father will not look for you there." He had looked at us and smiled, "I wish you every happiness." And with that, he left.

Since that day, Jack and I have been in Scotland, wandering between the other kingdoms before settling permanently in DunBroch with a few months old Diana. Only Jack had been back to England and only for one reason: to fulfill his promise to his sister. He came back a week later with a simple rosary and the sad news that his sister had been deathly ill and had died only minutes after he found her in the convent. She had lived long enough to hear that her brother was happily married with a child and a good job.

After Onceler closed hi stall in the evening, we decided to walk through the now nearly empty marketplace. As we walked, we caught up on each other's lives,

"How Jack? Is he still as annoying as he was the last time I saw him?" I giggled. During his time with my family, Jack had quickly established himself as a prankster and a trouble maker. His favourite target: Onceler. On a regular basis, Jack would pull a prank or just do something to annoy Onceler. But despite all the pranks and annoyances, Onceler couldn't help but like Jack.

"Jack hasn't changed a bit." I laughed when Onceler let out a sarcastic groan.

"That's too bad." He said in a voice overwhelming with sarcasm, "I was hoping for some peace and quiet." I laughed even more and gave him a small push on his shoulder,

"You are a horrible joker." He started to laugh too,

"I know," He hiccupped when the bout stopped, "That's why we have Jack." I laughed a bit more before changing the subject; I wanted to know how his life was since I'd last seen him,

"How's town? Any women catching your eye?" I winked and he chuckled nervously, his hand rubbing his neck,

"Town's still the same and all the women too; they still think I'm too work-orientated and all the women don't like that. Besides," He looked at me, "you know there is already a woman in my life." I stopped walking and he did too. I shook my head a little,

"You do know that her father doesn't trust you a bit?" He nodded earnestly with a smirk,

"I know but has that ever stopped us?" I chuckled and shook my head,

"Before you know it you'll end up like me." We both laughed. When the laughter died, I asked, "Are you staying at their inn again?"

"Yes. I wouldn't want to catch you and Jack in an embarrassing moment."

"Once!" I punched him playfully in his shoulder,

"What?" He retorted, "It was bad enough catching you and Jack kissing and besides, I hear you're already hosting a guest." I nodded and we stood there in silence for a few minutes before Onceler decided to head to the inn,

"I'll talk to you again soon?"

"Yes." He turned around and walked into the direction of the inn. He was almost out of hear-able distance when something important shot into my mind "Hey!" I yelled and he turned around. I cupped my hands around my mouth "There's going to be a gathering at my house in three days! Can you come?" Onceler smiled,

"Wouldn't miss it for all the gold in the world!"

* * *

><p>Merida's POV

I laughed so loud that I was certain everybody in DunBroch could hear it. The fact that Hendry was splashing in the water trying to get up from an embarrassing fall didn't help either. I clutched my stomach and doubled over, nearly choking from all the laughter.

"You know you're really not helping!" Hendry yelled as he finally got some balance back only to have his fake leg slide on some rocks. Luckily he didn't fall and he stumbled onto dry land, soaked from head to toe. Seeing him like that forced another bout of laughter that I smothered by covering my mouth. He brushed the wet hair away from his eyes and watched me as I died of laughter.

"I know I'm not." I managed to hiccup through my bouts. When the laughter died down, if only a little, I noticed his wet clothing; if he didn't change them, he'd get sick even though it was pretty warm today. He was looking down at his clothing and probably thinking the exact same thing. I was about to suggest an idea when he walked to the line of trees and just took his tunic off! Since that was the last thing I was expecting, I caught a look. He was muscular, result from years as a blacksmith, with an amazing physique and-

I averted my gaze when I realized what I was doing! I'm betrothed! I shouldn't be looking at another man! Trying to distract myself, I began to spin, staring up at the sky. Slow at first and when I found the fun in it, I began to spin faster and faster and faster until I was too dizzy to even stand. I collapsed to the ground and twisted onto my back, watching fluffy clouds of various sizes drift slowly by. It was then that I noticed the red hues in the sky. Had I really spent the whole day with Hendry? I heard something fall down in the grass and Hendry's head appeared beside me. We both stared silently at the sky, watching the clouds move by and the occasional flock of birds. Two ravens flew overhead and watching them reminded me of the Viking beliefs my mom made me learn: that Odin, their chief god, had two ravens that flew around the nine realms and reported back to him. I chuckled; those Vikings had some weird beliefs! Nine realms in a large tree and a bridge of rainbows that connected those realms!

"What's so funny?" Hendry asked. I looked at him and saw he was wearing a cloak that had probably appeared from his bag.

"Nothing." I looked back up at the sky, placing one of my hands under my head. "Do you ever wonder if there is somebody up there watching you?" Hendry remained silent; I turned my head and saw him staring at the sky,

"Yes." He answered quietly and I was certain I heard a twinge of sadness,

"Who?" He was silent for a long time before he let out a long sigh,

"My parents." I was confused at first then it dawned on me that the family Hendry had lived with before coming to work for dad wasn't his

real family. Nobody knew who his real parents were and nobody could get it out of the 14 year old.

"I'm sorry. Do you miss them?" He looked away and sniffed a little,

"Yes and no. I don't remember a lot about my mom and my dadâ€¦. I had always been a disappointment to him."

"Surely you don't mean that." How could somebody like Hendry be a disappointment to their own dad?

"I don't have a single memory where he said he was proud of me or that he loved me." He fell silent, sighing deeply and closing his eyes,

"Well if it helps," I said, catching his attention, "I think you are one of the most amazing people I have ever met." I meant it; I really did. I could be myself around him.

"Thank you." He whispered, his eyes shining with happiness. The next minutes were spent in utter silence, the two of us just staring at the sky. The silence was broken by Hendry's heavy sigh,

"Something wrong?"

"No," He replied nonchalantly, moving to a sitting position, "Just want to ask you something."

"What?" I teased in a singsong tone,

"There's going to be a gathering at Jack's and Rapunzel's place in three days. There's going to be music and dancing and everything. W-Would you maybe like to come? I'm sure they won't mind." I have never been to such a gathering before but Rapunzel had always described as if it was the best thing on this Earth. Besides, William wouldn't be back for at least 4 days, so what William doesn't know can't hurt me,

"I'd love to!"

****There you have it folks. Review, follow, favourite.****

9. Secrets of the Inn

****Two updates in one week? That has got to be a record! A few characters will be introduced and I terribly sorry if they're very ooc but in my defence, I haven't seen their movie; I've only seen trailers and very short clips.****

****There is some fluff and implied smut in this chapter. This is my first attempt at smut so don't be surprised if it sucks.****

****Chapter #9: Secrets of the Inn****

Third Person POV

The Transylvanian Inn was a popular spot in DunBroch, despite the fact that it was often filled with those from the MacInroy clan. On

any regular day, one would see a sea of black and red but today was busier than usual since many of the merchants and traders had decided to stay here; the hospitality of the inn may not be the best but the food and the drink was to die for.

The owner of the inn, Cairbre Donaghue, was the typical MacInroy man: dominant and a strong believer of "pure-blooded and pure-minded" but he never let that moral get in the way of business. After all: costumer is gold. Instead, he made any non-Scot pay more. That way he'd earn more and keep his morals intact.

Why someone like Onceler would stay at an inn like this was anyone's guess but the real reason was known by only a handful of people. Among them was Mavis, the only daughter and child of Cairbre.

Mavis was just as old as her friend Rapunzel: 24. Most women would have been married by this age but not Mavis. Cairbre had tried several times to talk her into finding a husband but each time she refused. The only reason he hadn't forced her to marry is because he made a promise to her mother before she died: that Mavis has a say in choosing a husband. Cairbre had agreed under the condition that Mavis' husband would be from clan MacInroy. Since the death of his wife, Cairbre had been searching for potential suitors, hoping to find one that would catch his daughter's eye.

But unbeknownst to him, a man had already caught Mavis' eye. She had known him quite a while and she knew that he was the only one she wanted to marry. There were just two problems: he wasn't from the MacInroy clan and, to make matters worse, he wasn't Scottish but Mavis didn't care. She was one of the few from her clan that didn't believe in the famous MacInroy moral.

Onceler entered the bustling inn and sat down at an empty table in a forgotten corner, earning a few sneers from passing MacInroy men. He stared quietly at the fireplace adjacent to the table. He didn't look up when the door of the inn burst open and prostitutes from local brothels entered and attempted to seduce a potential customer. The MacInroy men cheered loudly and looked at the whores with greedy and lustful eyes but Onceler ignored them and continued to stare at the fire, praying that they'd all let him be.

"Well, aren't you a pretty one." A blonde whore cooed as she set herself on Onceler's lap, wrapping an arm around his shoulders. Her slender finger caressed his cheek and she lowered her dress off of one shoulder, revealing the pale and smooth skin. She leaned close to his face, cupping his chin with her fingers. She leaned closer and closer, so close that their lips were almost touching. Suddenly, the blonde shrieked and the weight on Onceler's lap disappeared.

"Get out of here!" He heard a familiar feminine voice yell. The blonde hastily pulled the fabric back over her shoulder and ran out of the inn. Onceler's rescuer had her back to him. The only thing he could see was a simple black dress with a thick white trim at the hem of the dress and a long black hair that was done up in a braid. She turned around and saw the familiar mystifying blue eyes,

"Thanks, Mavis." He muttered, feeling his heart speed up in his chest. Mavis smiled and opened her mouth to say something when a voice boomed from nearly across the inn,

"Ah! A familiar face!" Mavis rolled her eyes and stepped aside ever so slightly as Cairbre approached. He stopped right by Onceler's table, his blue eyes glaring down at him, "Nice seeing you again." Cairbre commented, his voice overwhelming with sarcasm. Onceler gave a responsive nod,

"Likewise." Onceler replied in a fairly cold tone, his sight switching between Cairbre and Mavis.

"So, how long are you staying in DunBroch this time?" Cairbre inquired,

"At least 4 days."

"Ah. Staying for your sister's gathering are we?" Onceler nodded in reply, looking at Mavis again. She had her arms crossed and shook her head at her father's tone. There was a silence between the two men. "Same room as always?" Cairbre asked and Onceler nodded again. Cairbre turned around and looked at Mavis, "Get him something to eat and drink. Can't have my customers starve now can we?" He ordered as he walked away to welcome travelers that had just entered. Mavis rolled her eyes and walked away into the kitchens. Onceler continued to look into the fire until he heard something being placed onto his table,

"Here you go." He heard Mavis say as he looked at the hearty stew and ale she had brought him,

"Thanks." He muttered and felt his face heat up and his heart beat faster as he looked at her. Mavis smiled kindly

"Rapunzel told me you weren't coming this year." She said with disappoint the dominant tone. Onceler chuckled and rubbed his arm nervously,

"Sorry about that." Mavis let out a small laugh and placed her hand on the table, their fingers brushing against each other,

"It's alright." She consoled, "I'm just glad I got to see you again." Onceler looked at her and smiled,

"Me too."

* * *

><p>Still Third Person POV

It was close to midnight but Onceler nowhere near asleep. He was sitting on the bed in his room, half dressed and fiddling with his fingers. He had been waiting for a while now but for how long he didn't know. As he sat, a thousand questions buzzed through his mind. Where was she? Would she even come? Did she want to see him? Did-?

The creaking of the door snapped Onceler out of his trance. A figure carrying a small candle holder with a single lit candle entered the room, closing the door behind them and locking it. The figure turned around, the faint candle light revealing their face: Mavis. She was still fully dressed; she'd probably just finished downstairs. She looked at Onceler and smiled brightly. As she placed the candle on a

nearby table, Onceler stood up and walked to her,

"Your dad's asleep?" He whispered. She turned to face him and nodded,

"Yes." She whispered back.

"You sure?"

"Yes." She nodded and smiled even more bright. Onceler stopped in front of her. They stared at each other for only a second before they threw their arms around each other and kissed each other with all their might, stopping only to catch their breath, "I missed you so much." Mavis whispered before giving Onceler another passionate kiss, "Why didn't you tell Rapunzel you were coming?" They kissed again,

"I wanted to surprise Rapunzel," He gave her a tender peck, "And you." Mavis giggled and Onceler kissed her again.

"Could you quickly do something?" Mavis said in between kissing Onceler and taking breaths,

"What?" Mavis stopped the kiss, turned around and moved her braid over her shoulder, undoing the braid,

"Undo the back." She looked at him over her shoulder, "Please." Onceler looked at her for a moment but then slowly moved his hand down her spine to the carefully tied knot near the end of her spine. Mavis felt a shiver rack her body as Onceler moved his way up the string. When he had reached the top he discarded the string onto the floor. He moved his hand on her shoulder, going under her dress and chemise, feeling the soft and warm skin.

Mavis let out a sigh of ecstasy; oh god, how much she wanted him. She let out another deep sigh when she felt Onceler moving the dress and chemise off of her shoulder and let out a quiet moan when she felt his warm lips caressing her neck and shoulder. From an unexplainable reason, she turned around to face him. Mavis stared at Onceler and moved her hands to the edge of her dress and chemise, sliding them off of her shoulder and her body.

Onceler was given no chance to look at her naked body because Mavis had wrapped her arms around him and was kissing him again with a fire and a passion like never before.

"I love you." Onceler whispered when they broke the passionate kiss for breath.

"I know." Mavis whispered back, "I love you too." They smiled and they kissed each other again and again.

**Phew, there was my first smut scene. How did I do? I'm pretty sure that some of you think that I'm being repetitive with the braid but that's what they did in Medieval times. Young girls and unmarried women wore their hair in braids to keep dirt and such out of it while married women covered their heads. I know that Rapunzel is married but I didn't cover her head because I honestly could not think of a head covering that looked good with what she wears. Besides, in
Tangled, ****she never wears anything on her head, the

exception being the crown. Review, favourite, follow.**

10. Preparations

Another update, my exams are done and happy birthday to me, happy birthday to me! Yes today is my birthday and instead of giving you guys a party or cake, I'm giving you guys a new chapter! This is my last update before my vacation and I'm leaving you guys with a cliffie. Why? 'Cause that's how I roll. The next chapter will be the gathering and it'll be long (I might have to put it in two parts) I started a poll on my account about the fan fictions ideas I have. I just want to see which fiction you guys really want to read, so if you guys could drop a vote or two I'd really appreciate it. There is some religious stuff in this chapter. I have no idea what kind of religion the Scots or the Anglo-Saxons had at this time period (probably pagan, which I hardly know anything about) so I just went with Catholicism.

With that all being said, enjoy (there nothing to report in this chapter except a little Jackunzel and a bit of a tear jerking father-daughter scene)

Chapter #10: Preparations

Jack's POV

Tonight is the new moon and I'd be lying if I said I wasn't anxious. Sure, I've done this before but there was always the anxiety of the possibility of being caught. I stared at my hands, my fingers fiddling with the rosary and repeating silent prayers in my mind,

O Jesus! Royal virtue, joy of the mind, recall the anguish and sorrow Thou didst endure at the approach of death, when filled with bitterness, insulted, and outraged by the Jews, Thou didst cry out in a loud voice that Thou wert abandoned by Thy Father, saying: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" By this anguish, I beg of Thee, not to abandon us in our anguish, O Lord God. Amen.

I let out a quiet sigh. I touched my forehead with my index and my middle finger, then my heart and lastly my right shoulder and my left shoulder; the sign of the Cross.

"Jack? Are you alright?" I looked up and saw Rapunzel standing by the table, her face one of concern. Unlike me, she had already changed into the clothing she'd be wearing for the gathering: a deep greenish-blue dress with a thick white and decorated trim along the square neckline and the slightly widened sleeves.

"Can't help it if I'm anxious." I let out another sigh and stared back down at the rosary. I could hear Rapunzel feet move against the floor. She sat down beside me on the bed and rubbed my back, trying to ease me,

"Jack, you've done this before. Nothing's going to happen." She cooed, rubbing circles on my back.

"It's not only that." I turned my head and looked at her, our noses almost touching. She looked at me confused, "Seoc told me that Aileen has another assignment for me and I was hoping for us that we'd get

some quiet time after this."

"Jack, you knew what you were giving up when you volunteered for this; you knew what you were risking." She placed her hand on my cheek and rubbed her thumb over it "Everything will be fine. I promise." She took my hand in her free one and smiled. I must have been blessed by the heavens to have a wife like Rapunzel; so loving, so caring, and so supportive. She leaned closer and kissed me. I took in a quick and sharp breath and returned the kiss, making it more passionate and fiery. Rapunzel started to run her fingers through my hair and then-

BAM! BAM! BAM!

Somebody knocked loudly and roughly on the door. Rapunzel and I instantly separated and looked at the door. All was silent for a moment and then I got up. I opened the door, knowing exactly who it was.

Heather entered before I even had the door fully opened. As I closed the door, Heather walked to the table and dropped the large sack she'd been carrying on it.

Rapunzel opened the sack and smiled to see the pile of black clothing,

"Finished them this morning" Heather beamed as Rapunzel lifted a large black shirt from the sack to examine it. As Rapunzel began to unpack the sack, Heather turned her attention to me, "You remember where you are meeting Aileen?"

"Of course I do: the Ring of Stones."

"Alright." Heather nodded, "I'll see you there." She turned around and left without another word. In the meantime, Rapunzel had emptied all the contents of the sack onto two neat piles on the table. Both piles consisted the same items: a black shirt, black pants, black cloak and black boots. The only difference between the two was that one pile had bigger clothing.

"Heather has done a fine job." Rapunzel commented as her sight shifted between me and the clothing. I stared at them for a moment before reaching underneath the table and grabbing the key.

With the clothing under my arm, I headed to the hiding place. When the door opened, Tuffnut's head shot up, relaxing when he saw it was me. I walked to the table and placed the piles of clothing on it. I looked at Tuffnut and he nodded. I gave a weak smile and a nod before I left the room to prepare.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

As soon as Jack had left, Tuffnut and Rannveig began preparing for their life-threatening journey. They packed the few belongings they had and put on the black clothing they were given.

When he finished tying up the cloak, Tuffnut checked to see how Rannveig was doing only to find her fiddling with the ties on her

brown cloak; she'd wear the black one over it. He let out a forced chuckle and knelt in front of her, taking over the ties. When the brown cloak was done up, he wrapped the black cloak around her and tied that one up as well. He took the black hood and brought it to about halfway her scalp before placing it down. Watching her expression of fear, Tuffnut let out a sigh of worry and regret; no child should live a life like this, a life of hiding and constant fear.

Sensing his distress, Rannveig took her father's hand,

"Don't worry, papa." the 5-year-old cooed, "Thor will protect us." Tuffnut couldn't help but smile at his daughter's optimism. He knew that she was aware of their situation but hadn't dared to tell her what would happen if they were caught. He took her hand a bit tighter,

"Can you promise me something?" She nodded. Tuffnut sighed. What he was going to say next would be difficult for the both of them but he wouldn't be able to live with himself if something happened to Rannveig. "If the guards find us during the journey," He started and he felt Rannveig tense up, "Promise me that you'll run and not stop until you're over the wall."

"But you'll be running with me, right?" She asked in a small voice. That was the dreaded question Tuffnut was expecting. What he was going to say would not only shatter her heart but his as well. Slowly, he shook his head,

"I'll be keeping the guards at bay long enough for you to escape." It had been a hard decision but if it meant that Rannveig had a chance of reaching England on her own safely then so be it. As he had expected, Rannveig began shaking her head and started to cry, throwing her arms around his neck and sobbing into his shoulder, begging him to not leave her alone. Tuffnut wrapped his arms around her small body, feeling the tears collect at the bottom of his eyes. Rocking Rannveig back and forth, Tuffnut silently prayed to Odin and Thor to keep him and his daughter together, to keep them safe, and that they'll reach England but for now all they could do was wait.

A really short chapter, I know. If any of you want visuals on the clothing the characters are wearing, I post pictures of it on my deviantart account (I'm under the same name) If you go there, you'll also get an exclusive look at what the characters will be wearing during the gathering. I have no idea when I'll update next but I won't be for at least another month. Oh well. I'll see you guys then. Review, favourite, follow.

11. The Gathering (Part 1)

And here is the long awaited chapter. Man this thing was a nightmare to write! I knew what was going to happen and the order it was going to happen in but I had no idea how to put it in words. With some sections, I had to push myself to write. The consequence of that however is that the quality of writing goes down.

**I'm going to be honest but when I first started writing this I had no idea how much recognition and such I would get for this. I'm

breaking my own records here left, right and center. Of all my fictions, *_**Until the End *_**currently holds the record for most words, most followers, most favourites, and soon enough it'll break the record of most chapters, most views, and most reviews! I honestly cannot thank you guys enough!*_

*_Any questions you guys had in the AN are answered at the bottom.*_

*_The only heads up there is is that there is some alcohol involved in this but it's pretty brief.*_

*_Chapter #11: The Gathering Part 1*_

Merida's POV

"Maudie!" I yelled as I tried to close the back of my dress. Normally, I would've called Rapunzel but she had been given the night off for the gathering, " MAUDIE!" I yelled louder, grunting in frustration when the string wasn't cooperating with me. I continued to fiddle with it until I heard fast footsteps and the door opening. I turned and saw Maudie. I only had to motion to the string. She walked to me and took over. Before I could blink my eyes, Maudie finished tying the back. I turned around,

"Thank you, Maudie." I smiled and she gave me a small curtsy.

"Your welcome, princess." she smiled back and left the room quietly, closing the door behind her. I almost ran to the mirror, excited to see the finished result.

I had chosen a blue dress to wear. The corset and the skirt were a light blue while the widened sleeves were a darker blue. The over skirt had the shape of an upside-down V and was the same shade of blue as the sleeves. I chose this dress because it was simple yet formal enough for such a gathering and I didn't want to outshine anybody; I wanted to look like I belonged with the common folk.

I looked at myself and smiled; I looked and felt the part of a common woman but then I looked at my hand. I stared at it for a while, having a mental battle with myself. With a sigh but no regret, I removed my engagement ring and placed it on a nearby table.

I looked at the woman in front of me; she looked pretty, very pretty.

It took all my self-control to not bounce up and down, that's how excited I was but not just because of what I would soon experience. I was excited because I could see Hendry again.

Yes, I had seen him everyday for the past 3 days but the time we spent were the best I could remember. Never in my life did I have such a friend, beside Rapunzel. But last time we had met, however, it felt different. I don't know how but it did.

I looked once more, gave one last approval and ran out towards the kitchen. On my way, I nearly ran into my brothers, who were, without a doubt, playing another prank on Maudie. They didn't stop me from running, not even when they asked where I was going. Before I knew it I had reached the kitchens, not that many of the servants noticed;

I've walked around there very often. I looked at the open oak door and smiled. Like he promised, Hendry was waiting.

He was wearing a shirt that had green sleeves but there was a strip of dark reddish brown and then it went back to green. He was wearing black pants and brown boots. He looked at me and smiled, leaving his leaning position. He slowly walked towards me, his smile leaving his face,

"What?" I asked, feeling suddenly nervous under his gaze, nervous about my appearance. What is wrong with me?! I've never worried about what I looked like. Why should I suddenly now?

"You look beautiful." I felt my cheeks turn red and I let out a sheepish smile.

"Thanks." I muttered. He smiled and held out his hand to me,

"Shall we?" I looked at his hand for a moment before placing mine in it.

* * *

><p>Rapunzel"s POV

"When is Mavis coming?" I asked as I handed a full pint to Onceler. He took the pint from me, shrugging his shoulder before taking a chug.

"Don't know but she said she'd be here." He took a smaller chug while I nodded. I turned my attention to the gathering. It was nothing too fancy, we had built a large bonfire and the rest of the area was clear for dancing. There were also a large cart with barrels filled with drink; I just hoped that it would last the night. As I looked around, I immediately saw that many of the people weren't even invited, even some castle guards were walking around.

As I looked at the people, I couldn't help but admire the clothing the people were wearing. Everybody had put on their best, even Onceler and Jack. Onceler was wearing a light blue shirt with a closed vest over it of a darker shade of the same blue. He also wore light greyish-brown pants, black boots, and a small gold necklace he had gotten in a trade.

Jack was wearing a blue tunic that reached to about mid-thigh, black pants and boots, and a sash decorated with red and white diagonal stripes. Underneath it all, however, he wore the all black clothing for the escape. He was currently playing a lively tune on his fiddle, some others playing along with him with instruments they brought themselves.

"Rapunzel! Onceler!" I looked and saw Mavis approaching with Melvin, the aging mule pulling a cart filled with barrels. As I approached her with a smile and Onceler following close behind, I noticed that she'd also had put on her best. She was wearing a deep red dress with puffed sleeves, a white neckline, and a silver necklace that Onceler had bought for her years ago. She stopped Melvin and motioned to the cart, "This should be enough to last the night, right?"

"This will be plenty." I smiled. Mavis returned the gesture and urged

Melvin forward, Onceler now following her, taking hold of her hand. I turned around and saw two figures approaching from the direction of the castle. I immediately recognized Hendry and the red hair the one beside was too easy to recognize,

"Merida?" I started to walk towards them, my pace slowly speeding up to a jog. They looked at me and Merida waved, almost nervously from this distance. "What are you doing here?" I asked as I stopped jogging and they stopped walking,

"Hendry invited me." she said, motioning to him. I looked at him and saw his cheeks turn a shade of red.

"Merida?" I looked over my shoulder and saw Jack heading towards us, his fiddle in one hand and the bow in the other. He stopped right beside me, "Won't you get in trouble if you get caught here?" I knew that he was talking about William. In reply, Merida crossed her arms,

"What William doesn't know can't hurt me." She said nonchalantly. She walked to me, grabbed my hand and started to pull me to the gathering. I looked over my shoulder at Jack, who just shrugged.

* * *

><p>Merida's POV

I laughed loudly at a joke from Onceler, trying but failing to take a drink from my tankard. As the laughter started to die down, I looked up at the sky, seeing the countless stars, asking God why I couldn't have been like Onceler and Hendry. Somebody common. With freedom, no rules, no responsibilities and no arranged or forced marriages. Why couldn't I be like Jack and Rapunzel? Why couldn't I marry for love?

I stopped gazing when I heard music nearby. I looked and saw Mavis playing her lute and singing songs. Placing my elbow on one of the logs that served as benches and leaning my hand against my head, I listened intently to the songs. She had a pretty voice, I was almost jealous. I could sing but if I was good was another question. She finished a song and everybody that had listened clapped,

"Play another song!" Onceler cheered. Mavis smiled but shook her head,

"I think Merida should play something." And she handed her lute to me. I looked at it. I knew how to play but very little. I hardly paid attention when my mother gave me music lessons.

"I-I'm sorry but I don't play." I tried to hand it back but Mavis shook her head,

"You must know something." She encouraged. Well, there was one song I knew but it was a lullaby and it was accompanied by a fiddle,

"Jack!" I called. He stopped playing and walked over to me,

"Yes?" I stood up and whispered the song into his ear,

"Do you know it?"

"Like the back of my hand." He said with a grin, placing his fiddle by his neck. I sat down on the log and pulled the string, playing a B. I looked up at Jack and he nodded. I started playing. The introduction was just the lute. It was then repeated with the fiddle and then the song started then the song is repeated once more and then it is finished.

The end of playing the introduction with the fiddle came too fast. I sang the song, with a large smile on my face,

_A naoidhean bhig, cluinn mo ghuth
>Mise ri d' thaobh, O mhaighdean bhan
Ar righinn oig, fas as faic

>Do thir, dileas fhein
A ghrian a's a ghealaich, stuir sinn
>Gu uair ar cliu 's ar gloire
Naoidhean bhig, ar righinn og

>Mhaighdean uashaill bhan

Repeat. I started and was surprised to hear Mavis singing with me, harmonizing the song,

_A naoidhean bhig, cluinn mo ghuth
>Mise ri d' thaobh, O mhaighdean bhan
Ar righinn oig, fas as faic

>Do thir, dileas fhein
A ghrian a's a ghealaich, stuir sinn
>Gu uair ar cliu 's ar gloire
Naoidhean bhig, ar righinn og

>Mhaighdean uashaill bhan

Then I heard cheering and clapping. I couldn't help but smile and gave an awkward bow with my head. I handed the lute back to Mavis,

"I didn't know you could sing." Hendry commented. I looked at him and I was certain I was blushing.

"My mom used to sing that to me almost every night." I explained as I sat down beside him, "And it was the only song I let her teach me to play."

"It was very beautiful." Now I knew for certain that I was blushing as my head felt warmer than it should. Jack yelled something inaudible and the whole crowd cheered.

"What's going on?" I asked Onceler as he stood up.

"We're going to dance." He replied with a grin and he held out his hand to me. I lifted mine hesitantly but I got no chance to pull back as Onceler took my hand, lifted me up to my feet, and joined the circle

"Onceler!" I looked at him, feeling the most nervous I've ever felt, "I-I don't know the steps."

"Don't worry. It's a really easy dance." And Onceler wasn't lying. It started with two steps to the left and then a kick with your left leg. Then two more steps to the left and kick left, right, left. Two steps to the left, two to the right, repeat and then the whole dance

started again. At one point, someone broke the circle and started to lead the rest of us in random patterns. Before I could blink my eyes, Jack played the last note and everybody exploded in cheers and I was cheering with them just as loud. I couldn't express how happy I was. It was like a bubble had popped in me, I was suddenly releasing everything.

Jack yelled something and another cheer came through the crowd. Jack had announced another dance and everybody was grabbing a partner. Onceler looked at me but I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned and saw Hendry with his hand held out,

"May I have this dance?" He asked shyly. I looked back at Onceler, who nodded. I smiled and took Hendry's hand. I took my place at Hendry's right and we joined the circle, taking the hand of the one to my right. This dance was a bit more complex than the last but still easy. It began with a double step to the left and a double to the right; this was repeated. Then you'd take six steps to the left. Then the ladies let go of their right hand and place her hands on her partner's shoulder, while her partner places their hands on her hips. The women jump and her partner moves her to the other side. Then the whole dance repeated.

This dance was longer than the last but much more fun. I couldn't stop smiling nor keep myself from letting out a squeak every time my partner lifted me. I took a quick look around the circle; I was one partner away from Hendry. My partner lifted me and I took Hendry's hand again. We took the steps. I placed my hands on his shoulders and jumped but when I did, the music stopped! Hendry did lift me but he didn't put me down. I looked down at him and my breath hitched. My heart started to pound loudly and I felt weird in my stomach. I drowned in those green orbs as he slowly put me down, keeping his hands on my hips and my hands on his shoulders. We stared at each other, never leaving the eyes contact. The first one to move was me. I slowly let go of his shoulder and backed away. I turned around and walked away but as soon as I did, I feltâ€ empty.

**All the dances that occurred in this chapter are actual Medieval dances. I've danced them too. What I find funny about Medieval dances is that it can sometimes be a bit painful to watch but doing them is so much fun. I don't remember what the first dance is called but the second dance is called "Toss the Wench". Fun fact:

*****wench***** in the Medieval era did NOT mean prostitute, whore or something along those lines. In those times, *****wench***** referred to a young girl or woman who formerly worked a paid job, usually as a maid or on a farm. I'll try to have part 2 up soon. Really random question but how many of you want to see William? I noticed that he's hardly said anything and has only made a few appearances in the story so far.**

Answers

Guest: He'll come very very very soon. I promise!

eeveetrainer96: I'm currently figuring out how to incorporate them a bit more.

Review, favourite, follow.

12. The Gathering (Part 2)

****I'm sorry that I took so long but I had major writer's block with this chapter and it was also perhaps the worst I had ever experienced. The escape was a nightmare to write! Another character is introduced in this chapter but it's more of a glimpse. He/she will hopefully make an appearance next chapter. A little fun thing to point out, there's a moment in this chapter similar to a moment in the ending scene of ****_**Rise of the Guardians**_**. If you spot it then kudos to you. I finally watched ****_**Hotel Transylvania**_**** and now I realize that Cairbre (who's Dracula, for those of you who hadn't figured it out) is probably as OOC as can be.******

****Nothing to report this chapter. Enjoy!****

****Chapter #12: The Gathering (Part 2)****

Jack's POV

Rapunzel and I were standing quietly off to the side. I looked at her and she gave me a nervous nod. It was time. I silently snuck around our house and entered. After I closed the door behind me, I quickly undid the tie of my sash and threw my tunic off, revealing the black poet shirt. I grabbed a black cloak from its hiding spot and donned it on me, pulling the hood up.

I snatched the key and ran down to the storage room. We had kept the gathering on the opposite side of the front door and the storage room, which meant that both were bathed in shadow, ideal for sneaking. I quickly ran through the hallway and opened the door; Tuffnut and Rannveig were already waiting.

"Let's go!" I whispered harshly, my hand rapidly motioning for them to follow me. We ran out of the room, out the tunnel and up to the world. In the shadows we rapidly moved around the gathering towards the market place. As we walked by the gathering, I looked at Rapunzel. She looked back and nodded.

As we had thought, the market place was completely abandoned but we still moved close in the dark shadows of the buildings as guards could still be on patrol. The information from the triplets was very accurate but the patrols also changed, sometimes on a daily basis. When Aileen discovered that the teenage princes had an unconditional hatred for William and the massacre, she had convinced them to aid her cause by passing on information to people like me about the guards and their patrols. Their help had been invaluable.

We kept walking until we reached our first stop: a well. The well had been empty for years but no one ever bothered to permanently close it; even the rope was still attached. When I joined the operation, this well also became invaluable. The well was the entrance to a manmade tunnel that led to a forgotten corner of the outer wall. With this well, it became easier to sneak escapees out.

I looked down the deep pit, the bottom overwhelmed in darkness and the tunnel invisible.

"I'll take Rannveig now." I whispered. Tuffnut and I had already

planned this. If anything came up, an obstacle or something, I would take Rannveig with me. It was also safer for her if she went down the well with me. Tuffnut passed the little girl to me. She wrapped her legs around my torso and her arms around my neck; she had to hold herself up while I lowered us. I grabbed the rope,

"Hold on tight." I whispered and started to lower ourselves down the rope into the darkness.

Luckily, Rannveig was not that heavy but carrying someone while trying to descend a rope was no easy feat. I was more than glad when I reached the end of the rope, a little over a meter from the ground. I dropped the two of us and landed like a cat, a small squeal escaping from the girl.

Tuffnut followed shortly afterwards, landing with much less grace. As he picked up Rannveig, I had scoured the floor for the torch that always lay there. After finding it, I lit the torch with a bit of flint and steel, blowing lightly on the flame to get it going. I picked up the torch and revealed the long, dark tunnel, just big enough for a grown man.

The three of us walked in silence with me leading. There was not a sound; no water dripping, nothing. The only sounds were our footsteps, breathing and the occasional squeak of a rat, quickly followed by a gasp from Rannveig. When the end of the tunnel came into sight, I extinguished the torch and laid it on the ground for usage on the return journey.

Ahead of the exit was a large open field followed by the dense forest; this was the most dangerous part of the journey. If we were spotted here, it was over. The field was the reason we clad ourselves in black and only attempt an escape during the new moon. That and the fact that there were always wall patrols at this time; the angst of a possible attack from Aileen and the others.

"Ok," I whispered to Tuffnut, "We have to run very fast here. I'll go first and I'll take Rannveig with me." Tuffnut nodded and quickly translated. Rannveig nodded too. Out of my pocket, I took a small wooden whistle. "When we're safe on the other side, I'll make this sound." I blew on it and the sound it made almost sounded like an owl. "Then you can go."

Tuffnut nodded and handed Rannveig to me. We emerged from the tunnel. I looked up at the wall and was relieved to see that there were no guards at the moment. We dashed across the field, first hiding behind a large rock. I glanced at the wall again but there were still no guards.

It was continuous patterns of run, hide, run, hide. Much to my surprise, a guard rarely appeared on the wall, almost as if they didn't care if the castle was attacked or not.

We kept running until we reached safety of the dense borders of the forest

I made the call and we waited. One minute passed and another but Tuffnut wasn't appearing. I watched intently, Rannveig holding tightly on my sleeve.

A wave of relief hit me when Tuffnut came running to us; the worst part was over. Navigating through the forest in the dark without light was difficult but at least there was no immediate threat. We walked nearby, but not on, the main road, which passed close by the Ring of Stones.

I looked behind me and saw Tuffnut carrying Rannveig, the little girl hitting branches and giggling quietly

I turned my attention in front of me. It was then that I heard distant voices laughing and light approaching dangerously close to us,

"Get down! Hide!" I whispered, hiding myself behind some bushes. Tuffnut followed suit, placing his finger in front of his mouth, looking at Rannveig. She nodded. The three of us sat in silence as the light approached near us on the road. From the voices and the shadows, I could tell that it were two men riding. I kept looking until the two men came into sight, the torch one of them was holding revealing their faces.

It was William MacInroy. The one holding the torch, the rider beside him was CinÃ¦ed, his left hand man. CinÃ¦ed was one of the men that always attacked Rapunzel; he was the same man that attacked Hendry on the day he arrived at DunBroch. How a man like him ever reached a position so close to William remains a mystery since the young lord usually outcasted men like CinÃ¦ed. He wasn't "normal". The man had scars from old burns covering one entire side of his face; "the face of the devil" some had called it.

"How in God's name did you convince her to do it?" CinÃ¦ed chuckled.

"It was too easy." William replied, slowing his horse slightly, "Just threaten a woman that you'll kill her only child and she'll do anything for you." Horror racked in me. What did William do?

"And her husband doesn't suspect anything?" William pulled on the reins, commanding the black horse to stop. He looked at the man,

"Please, Ewan's a fool. If someone were to tell him that the Earth moved around the Sun, he'd believe them." Ewan? Ewan MacIntosh? It had to be Ewan MacIntosh. William would never associate himself with the common folk unless it was absolutely necessary. If it was Ewan MacIntosh he was talking about, then what did William do to Ewan's wife, Anna? The two men kept riding, talking to each other loudly. The two continued on their way, slowly disappearing around a corner. I would've liked to keep listening to the two talk and hopefully find out what William did to Anna but my priority at the moment was Tuffnut and Rannveig.

I emerged from my hiding spot, carefully placing my steps; a snap of wood could still be heard by William, even at this distance.

We continued to walk silently, keeping our distance from the road and placing our steps very carefully.

When the Ring of Stones appeared, I let out a small laugh and quickened my pace to a run. Tuffnut followed suit.

We entered the circle, myself taking in the sight of the cloaked figures, all of them with their hood down; a rare occurrence. Everyone was there: Aileen Fletcher, Fionntan Morrison, Seoc and SeÃ²dsaidh Johnston, and, the only one that doesn't wear a cloak, Heather Williamson.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Aileen always became very nervous when it came to an escape, though she'd never admit it. On this particular night she was even more nervous. Jack was late. She'd been pacing back and forth on the same spot for several minutes, the grass flattened completely.

"Don't worry, Aileen." Heather consistently cooed, sitting on top of one of the smaller rocks, "Jack'll make it. He's done this many times." Aileen looked up at her and sighed, pushing her hood off of her head.

"You're right." She sighed, climbing up to sit beside Heather. She looked up at the starry sky, noticing the clouds on the horizon, slowly getting bigger. Aileen continued starrng at the sky, not really noticing the wind starting to pick a little.

"There they are!" Heather yelled, pointing to the forest. Everybody looked and out of the forest, Jack, Tuffnut and Rannveig appeared.

"Jack!" Aileen called as she jumped down from the rock and ran to him, "What took you so long?"

"Sorry, we had some trouble getting here." Jack replied as he ushered Tuffnut and Rannveig to Seoc and Fionntan, the two men giving the escapees supplies and instructions,

"What happened?" Aileen inquired as she moved away from the others, Jack following,

"William MacInroy is returning to DunBroch." Aileen stopped in her tracks, grabbing his shoulders

"What? You're sure?" Jack nodded,

"Yes. I saw him with CinÃªed near the main road." Aileen let go of his shoulders and began pacing again, contemplating and processing the information,

"Why is he coming back now!?" She asked out loud, throwing her hands in the air, "He's not due back in DunBroch until tomorrow at noon!" Jack shrugged his shoulder, leaning his back to a stone,

"I don't know. Guess he got tired of the north." He looked at Tuffnut and Rannveig, "Are they ready?"

"Almost. There's been a slight change of plans." Jack looked at the woman confused,

"What?"

"Nothing too big. There's just another person going with them." Aileen motioned her head and Jack looked. Tuffnut was standing in a tight embrace with a woman that looked exactly like him. Both their eyes were watered and the woman held a death grip on Tuffnut's shoulders. When they let go of each other, they gave each a gentle head butt, probably because of the injuries on the woman's forehead. She looked at Tuffnut and gave him a hard punch on his shoulder. He let out a shriek of pain but laughed anyway.

A bright smile played on Jack's face as he watched the reunion and Tuffnut's introduction of Rannveig to the woman; it reminded him of his reunion with his sister all those years ago,

"Tuffnut's twin?" Jack asked Aileen, who was watching with the same intensity as he was,

"The one and only." Jack looked back to the reunion. Tuffnut was looking at him and gave a nod, a sign of deep appreciation for everything Jack had done for him and Rannveig. Jack returned the nod and smiled at the little girl, holding her father's hand tightly.

Jack lifted the hood and turned to leave, not noticing that Rannveig was watching him.

"Jack!" Rannveig let go of her father's hand and ran to the leaving man. Just as he turned around, the little girl threw her arms around his legs. Jack gasped when he felt the girl crash into him but that quickly turned into a smile as he lowered himself and hugged the little girl back "I miss you." He heard her whisper in broken English.

"I'll miss you too." He whispered back, tightening the hug, relishing the brief moment that he felt like a father again.

* * *

><p>Jack's POV

I rejoined the gathering while tying my sash. Most of the people had already left but there were still plenty left. Merida, Hendry, Mavis and Onceler were all sitting around the bonfire. They were probably doing a drinking contest because Onceler and Merida were constantly refilling their tankards and emptying them just as fast,

"What?!" I heard Merida yell at Onceler, punching his shoulder. I noticed she was slurring. Did Onceler get Merida drunk? Hendry probably noticed as well as he tried to take the tankard from her but she quickly pulled it closer to her, "You boys think a princess can't drink!?" She yelled at them followed by a loud and drunken chortle. I shook my head and walked to Rapunzel, who was standing in the exact same spot as when I left. As soon as she saw me, she enveloped me in a tight hug; that I was back meant that the escape went smoothly.

"Well?" She asked anyway, letting go of me, "How did it go?"

"Everything went smoothly," I said as I brushed a strand of hair

behind her ear, "They're on their way to England." I let out a sigh and looked out to the bonfire, watching Hendry and Merida laughing, "I'm going to miss Rannveig."

"Well, you might have your own little Rannveig running around soon." I looked at her confused. What was she talking about?

"What?" Rapunzel let out a chuckle and tears of happiness appeared in her eyes.

"I'm pregnant, Jack." She laughed at my face of surprise. An almost child-like spread across my face. With a yell of happiness and joy, I lifted her into the air and twirled her around, earning a happy squeal of laughter from her. I set her down and placed a kiss on her rosy lips

"You'll be extra careful this time?" I asked when we separated. Rapunzel had had experienced many miscarriages in the last few years and each miscarriage had a deep emotional impact on Rapunzel that took a long time to recover from. She nodded

"Of course I will." She smirked and leaned in for another passion filled kiss. We separated when we heard someone yell a name. I recognized the voice and it was one that I hoped I didn't have to hear here.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

"MAVIS!" Mavis and Onceler separated hastily from there kiss when they heard her name being yelled. They looked and saw a furious Cairbre pacing towards them.

"Dad!" Mavis stood up and ran to him, trying to stop from walking towards Onceler, "It's not what it looks like!" He looked at her and pushed her to the ground, continuing towards Onceler, only stopping when Jack interfered.

"What do you want, Cairbre?"

"This is none of your business, Overland!"

"Dad!" Mavis bravely took a place in front of her angry father, "It not what it seems! This isn't me fooling around!" She looked at Onceler before looking back at Cairbre, "I love him!" Cairbre looked at Mavis, his face becoming so red that it looked like it was going to burst. Hardly anybody caught the swift movement of Cairbre hand hitting Mavis' cheek until her head shot to the side, her hand caressing the reddening skin.

The whole time, Onceler stood by and watched, feeling completely responsible for what was happening. He had enticed Mavis into the kiss, he was the reason she got hit.

"Cairbre," He stepped in-between daughter and father, "I'm at fault here." Onceler tried to sound as calm and as modest as he could. He bit on his lip for a second, trying to bite down the overwhelming feeling of grief for what he was going to say, "I'll leave," He glanced at Mavis, "And I'll never come back." Cairbre looked at the

young man in front of him,

"Then leave." Onceler glanced once more at Mavis before disappearing to retrieve Melvin. All Mavis could do was watch, with tears in her eyes that she refused to release, as the only man she ever had feelings for disappeared out of her life forever.

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

After the gathering ended, the weather switched. It was storming outside, the rain tapping loudly on the roof, lightning flashing often; Thor must be angry. I was lying on my bed, staring into the fading embers. I hadn't slept for a second. My mind was buzzing about that dance with Merida. Why had we stared at each other like that? Why had I felt weird in my stomach? It was just a dance but why did my heart start to pound like a drum? Did I-?

I sighed and turned onto my back, closing my eyes. I knew it couldn't be. Merida's a princess. And me? I'm a crippled blacksmith. What could I possibly give her? I lay in silence, listening to the storm but then I heard something that didn't belong in a storm. I sat up and listened.

There it was again! It sounded like a screech but what creature would be out during a thunderstorm?

After getting up and dressed, I went to the door but wasn't surprised when I found it was locked. I slowly lifted the beam, not trying to wake Jack and Rapunzel up. I opened the door and was immediately greeted by a rush of wind.

I stepped outside and quickly closed the door behind me, my clothing drenched within seconds. I walked up to a higher point. I looked up at the sky, shielding my eyes from the pounding rain. There was a sudden flash of light. I waited for the thunder but it never came. I scoured the sky but I saw nothing out of the ordinary

Then I heard the screech. It started soft, barely audible over the rain, but it got louder and louder and louder and then-

BAM!

A flash of white light and a vague silhouette of something large flying in the sky. At that moment, a memory flashed in my mind. A memory of a wooden tower. I heard the same screech in the memory and the tower exploding in a flash of white light.

That could only mean one thing: dragon! And not just any dragon. A Night Fury: the unholy offspring of lightning and death! I squinted my eyes and could faintly make out the creature flying in the clouds, the one the Night Fury is attacking. It didn't take long for me to guess which dragon it was; only one other dragon could be found in a thunderstorm.

A Skrill.

It was obvious the two dragons were fighting. I watched the Skrill as it breathed flames of white at random, trying to hit his opponent but

he always missed. A Night Fury, however, never misses its target. I heard the Night Fury screech again but instead of a ball of fire, there was a flash of lightning and a horrible screech of pain. I vaguely could make out something falling out of the sky towards the forest. The loud snaps of trees and branches could clearly be heard.

The Night Fury was down.

****Three guesses who got struck by lightning when he was fighting a Skrill. If any of you are curious to know how Anna is going to look, there's a picture of her on my deviantart account (I'm still under the same name). Go ahead, kill me for what I did to Mavis and Onceler but trust me when I say, this is not the end for them. Review, favourite, follow.****

13. Impossible Apologies

****School has started again for me, which means that updates will come slower now, especially since I'm in my last year of high school. That means diplomas! I'm so looking forward to that! NOT!****

****On a happier note, I loved writing this chapter because a new character is introduced and he talks so funny. I know there are probably a few out there that don't like it when characters are swearing but you'll be happy to know that there is NO swearing done with the funny talking. It'll look like swearing sometimes but trust me, it isn't. The only people that actually swear in this story are from the MacInroy clan (excluding Mavis) or Aileen (briefly).****

****That being said: nothing to report. Enjoy!****

****EDIT: the full title is "Impossible Apologies and Strange Encounters" (I couldn't type in the full title)****

****Chapter #13: Impossible Apologies and Strange Encounters******

>

Merida's POV

The morning after the gathering I woke up feeling nauseous and with a headache. I told Rapunzel to tell my mother that I was sick and wouldn't be able to do any lessons today. Everything that day was cancelled for me. On any normal day it would be a dream come true but I was stuck in my bed. The physician came by and gave me a hot broth mixed with rose, lavender, and sage from my headache and an ointment made from wormwood, mint, and balm for the nausea. It took a while but eventually the headaches and nausea became less.

I just lay in my bed, a few minutes feeling like several hours. The only one that came by occasionally was Rapunzel, each time giving me a bit of the broth and ointment. It wasn't until noon that the headaches and nausea ceased. Rapunzel entered just as I got out of my bed.

"How are you feeling?" She asked as she walked towards me,

"Much better than this morning." I looked at her and she smiled. I looked around my room. Three large trunks in the corner caught my eye, "What are those?" I pointed. Rapunzel turned around and looked where I was pointing,

"Your mother ordered several dresses for you." What?

"But I have plenty of dresses! Why would I need more?"

"She wanted you to have a few dresses that were in the style of the MacInroys." MacInroy style: dresses consist of a high waist line (just below the breasts) and a wide neckline. That style wasn't too popular here but William's sister and his late mother had found it very fashionable. "She wants you to try them on."

"I don't want to!" I pouted and crossed my arms. Rapunzel placed her hands on her hips and tapped her foot

"Better you do it now and get it over with!" She retorted. Dropping my arms, I let out a groan; I should know by now that I can't win fights like that from Rapunzel.

Rapunzel had already laid out a dress for me to try on. I stood in front of the mirror in defeat and let Rapunzel do her work.

The dress was perhaps the most extravagant I've ever put on. The skirt was dark green and the over skirt had an upside down V shape of a lighter green but heavily embroidered with patterns of the dark green. The bodice was the same as the overskirt and the thin, white neckline barely reached my shoulders. The neckline was decorated with many small white, gold, and black beads. The sleeves were dark green and very wide and above them were trumpet sleeves, which were decorated with the same embroidery as the bodice and overskirt.

As soon as Rapunzel finished tying everything string of this dress, she decorated my head with a headband made of pearls and a similar necklace that was so long that she had wrapped it once around my throat.

I looked in the mirror; I didn't recognize the woman standing there. That woman wasn't me. Rapunzel stood beside me with the same solemn look on her face; she knew what I was thinking.

"Want to take it off?" she asked softly and gently. I nodded; not only did I hate the extravagance but the dress was so heavy, probably heavier than Angus, a mature Clydesdale. Rapunzel walked to my back to start the long process of taking the dress off when there was a knock at my door. I looked to the oak but the door didn't open, which meant it wasn't my mother. I straightened my back and tried to sound as regal as possible,

"Come in." I heard the click of the lock and the handsome figure of Artair walked in. He bowed low before me. As he straightened himself, he looked at Rapunzel briefly, who looked away.

"Your majesty," He started politely, "my lord wishes to speak with you." I looked at Rapunzel who replied with a barely visible shrug. I walked out of my room with a straight back and my head held high. I walked regally towards the room that served as a place for William to do the business of his lands while he was away from his castle. I

knocked quietly and entered when I heard him speak. He was standing by the window, looking out to the courtyard. He turned around and I could've sworn that he smiled at me.

"Your majesty." He said as he bowed.

"My lord," I curtsied and we straighten at the same time, "Artair told me you wished to speak to me." He smiled again and motioned to two chair by the fireplace. I walked to one chair and sat down, William taking the other.

"After coming back, I realized that I haven't been acting the way I should've during my stay here." I listened and in my mind agreed with what he was saying. What was he going to do now. Gloat or give the impossible apology? "As an apology, I humbly invite you to my castle in the north."

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

The crunch of leaves below my foot echoed through the forest as I looked left and right, looking. After what I saw last night, going to the smithy was out of the question. A Night Fury, the rarest dragon in existence, had crashed into the forest and I was going to find it.

Hopefully.

I walked and walked but there was no sign or evidence that a dragon had been there. I sighed when I thought I saw some evidence but turned out to be just a few snapped branches, the damage too small to suggest that a dragon had been there.

"_NEE-AH!"_A voice yelled. Letting out a yelp, I looked around me. Left, right, behind, and in front but there was nobody; it must have been in my mind. Shaking my head, I dismissed the voice and kept walking.

"_Lacksmart, crumply, weeklyweed son of a pesti-sting!"_It was the same voice again but it sounded angrier than last time. I looked around again but there was nothing but trees and plants. I shook my head again and hit my temple as well. Was I going mad?

I was so focused on the voice that I didn't notice that the earth disappeared below my foot until I was falling down a hill, the grass and fallen branches scratching and snapping at my body. When I finally stopped, I let out a loud groan. Everything hurt, everything; it even felt like my prosthetic was hurting. I looked up.

There in front of me was a short passage way covered and surrounded by two walls of stone. At the end was an opening that was just large enough for me to walk through and was showered in green. Curious, I got up, ignoring the pain on my stump and walked through. The passage led to another rock, which overlooked a cove that made me think that I was in Valhalla. There was a large drop from my spot that overlooked a sheltered field of the greenest grass and the strongest trees with a lake in the corner, fed by a stream coming from outside the cove. The tranquil moment, however, didn't last long as my thoughts returned to the missing Night Fury,

"This was a stupid idea." I whispered. Sighing and dropping my head, I turned around to head back to the castle when something caught my eye, something that didn't belong amongst the gray and green. Crouching down, I examined it. It was large enough to fit in my palm, had a triangular shape, and was a dark navy blue color. When I picked it up, I knew what it was: a scale.

I looked into the cove but suddenly something large and dark shot by me, my surprise knocking me down to the ground. I hastily got up and watched as the dragon clawed at the rocky wall before gliding down over the lake back to the ground. A smile worked its way onto my face as I watched the Night Fury. I carefully climbed down to a lower rock, still a good 60 feet from the grass of the cove.

The Night Fury jumped up again to fly but he hit the walls and started clawing again, before falling back to the ground by the lake, looking up when he saw a fish splashing in it. As the dragon bit into the water, I grabbed my notebook and made a rough sketch him.

The Night Fury wasn't what I'd expect him to be. While most other dragon were large with long thin necks, this dragon was medium-sized with a sleek body that consisted of a heavy chest and a short neck. He possessed no horns and his body length I'd estimate to be between 30-40 feet while his wingspan could be between 50-60 feet. I looked from my sketch to the dragon and back

"Why don't you just fly away?" I asked myself. I looked again at the dragon and noticed his tailfins; one was missing. I took the sketch and quickly wiped away one on the tailfins.

"Because me can't, you lacksmart no-brainer" It was the voice again. It took me by surprise and I dropped my charcoal pen. I tried to reach for it but the piercing stare of the Night Fury took my attention; a strange thought crossed my mind. Could the voice have been the Night Fury? No, it couldn't be. Dragons can't talk. The dragon continued to stare at me, almost as if he was expecting me to do something. Run away, attack, talk, maybe drop dead. _"Lacksmart wingless land prisoner." _The voice scowled. I must be going mad. A strange voice in my head and a dragon that looked like he was expecting me to do something,

"Are you talking to me?" I tried. The dragon's head perked up fast, the two ear-like plates on his head standing up straight and he suddenly looked questioning and confused, a look I had never seen in a dragon before. The voice didn't say anything and we continued our staring until I got up and left. I walked back to the castle, trying to process what I saw and luckily the voice didn't bother me.

* * *

><p>The Night Fury watched as Hendry left, the creature feeling just as confused as the human. He had talked to the human and he talked back, something that hadn't happened in centuries. It only took the human's reply for the Night Fury to know what the human was and what his ancestors were: Whisperers.

**What do you think Merida will say. Yes or no? And yay, Toothless has appeared! At the suggestion of LunaMoonlight100, I made Toothless speak Dragonese. I hope I didn't make it too confusing. Review,

favourite, follow.**

14. Touch

**Wow. That was a really fast update; I think that might be a record for this story. And even better yet I already have a lot written out for the next chapter so that one could be updated very soon as well.
**

School's ok, I guess, but oddly enough I don't wish that it was summer again.

Nothing to report except some language but it's only one word. Enjoy!

Chapter #14: Touch

Hiccup's POV

I was probably as surprised as anybody was when I heard that Merida was heading to MacInroy castle in the north. She had left early this morning and, though I'd never admit it, I was sad that she was gone. She'd only be gone temporarily but, gods, would I miss her.

I tried not to think about her because every time I did my hands got sweaty and I'd start to daydream and that was something I didn't want to do right now; I wanted to keep my balance. I was on my way back to the cove. With me I had a fish. I had seen the way the dragon had been biting at the fish in the lake. He was hungry and he must like fish.

I was hard to retrace my steps from yesterday but after at least an hour, I had found where I had fallen and rolled down the hill.

I walked into the cove with the fish in my hand. I climbed down the rocks and landed ungracefully on the grass, dropping the fish. After getting up and retrieving it, I was surprised to see no Night Fury anywhere. I kept walking, looking only ahead of me. I heard something move behind me and there was the dragon, hiding on a large rock. He climbed down with much more grace and walked around me, smelling the air.

"What did you bring? Grubbings?" I held the fish out to him carefully,

Saltswimmys!" He slowly approached me, opening his mouth slightly to take the fish but suddenly he snarled and became vicious, _"PRICKER!"_ His outburst scared me and caused me to jump back, _"Get rid of da pricker or me'll kill you!"_ He yelled, snarling louder and baring his teeth, digging his claws into the earth

Out of fear, I reached for my dagger but as soon as my fingers brushed the hilt, a thought jumped into my mind. I took the dagger out, earning a loud snarl from the dragon. I held it up for him to clearly see.

"Pricker?" I asked

_"Yessee" _He replied; that could mean 'yes'. I dropped my dagger, my

last bit of defence, and kicked it into the water. As soon as the metal hit the water, the dragon sat up straight, completely docile. I held out the fish again and slowly, step by step, he approached, sniffing. He stood in front of the fish, opening his mouth. I was surprised to see nothing but pink gums,

"Toothless? I could've sworn that all dragons have-" Suddenly, teeth shot out of the gums and he snatched the fish out of my hand, gobbling it in seconds, licking his lips gleefully when he was finished. He looked at the flabbergasted me, "Teeth." He dropped to all fours and approached me, looking up and down as if he expected me to have more food. I backed away, tripping on my prosthetic onto my rear. I continued backing away until my back hit a boulder; the dragon's face was so close I could feel his breath, "I don't have any more." I tried. To my relief, the dragon stopped his approach. We stared for a moment when he suddenly made a weird noise. He bobbed his head up and down and his chest moved in an odd way. He lowered his head to my lap and dumped a half-carcass of the fish I had just fed him onto it, covered in his stomach fluids. He moved to sit on his hind legs and looked at me. Holding the fish in my hands, I felt awkward

staring back, often averting my gaze.

At least a minute was spent like this before the Night Fury looked from the fish to me, "Eat," he instructed. I looked at the carcass and letting out a sigh of defeat, I took a bite. It tasted revolting. No. Worse than revolting. It was so disgusting that I didn't swallow. I held up the fish for the dragon to see but he still didn't look happy.

He swallowed.

I let out a loud grunt and with even more reluctance, I swallowed. It tasted worse even worse in my throat and it took all my inner strength to not throw it all up. The dragon, seemingly happy, smacked his lips.

I replied with a crooked, slightly forced, smile. He looked at me and slowly twitched the corners of his mouth up, revealing his toothless mouth; he was trying to imitate me. Did he trust me now?

I got up and reached out my hand, trying to touch his muzzle. The Night Fury growled, flashed his teeth, and flew away into a corner of the cove. Once there, he walked in a small circle, burning the ground, and lay down in it to go to sleep.

Meanwhile, I stood and watched, feeling disappointed. I had the opportunity to touch a dragon, maybe gain its trust, and I ruined it.

* * *

><p>Rapunzel's POV

I was probably more surprised than Jack was when I heard that his next assignment from Aileen was none other than Hendry himself. I never would've thought of him as a Viking; I couldn't see any Viking qualities in him. He wouldn't be as difficult as the others me and Jack had sheltered. Unlike all the others, Hendry was the only one

that could actually go out into the public view. Even so, I don't think that we could've kept him cooped up in the hidden room for too long; he had once again disappeared from the smithy, not that he was behind on work or anything.

I knew he was gone because I had gone by the smithy in between my duties; Merida may be gone but my list of work doesn't stop. I wasn't allowed to go with her to MacInroy castle because Anglo-Saxons hadn't set a foot on that land for 15 years and William wanted to keep it that way. My duties were mostly laundry; the princes, the king, and the queen had stayed behind. They had decided that this was a trip that Merida should do on her own, her chance to represent her clan. I was heading for the laundry room with a basket filled with clothing from the princes; they had decided to prank someone and it involved mud, a lot of mud.

As I walked, I had an uneasy feeling, like someone was following me. I looked over my shoulder and saw Artair; he had stayed behind as well, probably to keep William informed about what was happening in DunBroch.

I faced the front and took a turn into an empty hallway. I was suddenly roughly turned around and pinned to the wall, two arms blocking an escape,

"You know," The seductive voice of Artair cooed, "I never associate myself with Anglo-Saxon whores." he ran his knuckles over my cheek. I flinched away from his touch, "But there's something about you that I like." I heard a tone in his voice and hearing it scared me. From his tone I could hear that he was aroused. He lifted his knuckles again but I slapped his hand away, dropping the basket,

"Keep your filthy hands off of me!" I snapped and I tried to duck under his arms but to no avail. He had me trapped,

"Come on, you know you want to." No, I don't want to. I don't love Artair. I love Jack and he's the only one with whom I'd want to, "Don't deny it. I can assure you that what your husband doesn't know can't hurt you." He leaned closer to me, closer to my lips; he wanted to kiss me. I took this moment, the moment he was distracted, to push him away from me. He flew to the opposite side of the hallway,

"I said keep your filthy hands off of me!" I snapped louder, pointing a finger. I picked up the basket and continued to the laundry room, ignoring for the rest of the day what had happened.

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

The dragon had been asleep for a few hours now but I hadn't left the cove. The dragon fascinated me; there were so many question buzzing through my head but what stubbed me most him was why I could understand what he was saying. As far as anyone was concerned, dragons spoke in growls and snarls, not words.

During the quiet hours of the cove, I decided to give him a name; I couldn't always call him 'the dragon' or 'the Night Fury'. I decided on Toothless, after his toothless mouth when he's docile.

Out of boredom, I sat down on a boulder with a stick in my hand and started to draw into the soft, grainy dirt. With the image in my mind, I started to draw the lines, so focused that I didn't hear Toothless until he was right beside me, his shadow engulfing me and the drawing. I didn't look up and kept drawing,

"Pretty." Toothless cooed when he saw what I was drawing: him. He watched me draw then suddenly walked away on his hind legs. I looked up when I heard the snap of wood and there was Toothless, with a tree in his mouth, drawing lines in the dirt. He'd walk here, give a twirl there, nearly hitting me with the branches and the leaves a few times. I watched him do his creative dance around me until he dropped the tree and cooed proudly at the finished result, which consisted of random lines and loops.

I looked amazed around me and took a step, which resulted with my foot standing on one of the lines

"Na." Toothless growled, flashing his teeth. I immediately lifted my foot; a crazy yet fun idea came, causing a small grin. I put my foot down,

"Na!" Toothless growled again, louder and a bit more vicious than last time. I lifted my foot and waited for a second before putting it down again,\

"NA!" I lifted my foot but placed it this time on the ground beside it. Toothless was docile and I smiled again. So he didn't like it when I stepped on the lines? I looked around and placed my steps carefully as I continued to walk, trying to exit the circle. Step left, right, turn a bit there and step left, two more to the right and I was out of the circle, only to feel a hot breath on my head and a shadow on me. I turned around and stumbled back at the sight of Toothless.

I reached for his muzzle again, much slower than last time, but the closer I got, the more he showed his pointed teeth. I retreated my hand and he was docile again. He always snarled when I tried to touch him, like he was scared. It's not the speed of my hand or me as a person. Maybe it was something else.

A theory popped into my mind; when you want a dog to sniff your hand, you'd usually hold it out and wait for him to approach you. Maybe it was the same with Toothless but if I did it and it went wrong, I'd cost me my hand. I looked at Toothless then turned my head away and shut my eyes, my hand reached out for him.

Toothless didn't growl, didn't snarl, didn't say anything. Seconds passed, each one feeling like a minute until I felt something against my hand, something hard but warm. My first reaction was fear and I dared myself to glance. My hand was on Toothless' muzzle. His eyes were closed and he seemed to be in a trance, one that was rather short-lived. He opened his eyes, moved away from my touch and flew away.

I stood still in my spot, the warmth of his scales still emanating from my hand, only now realizing what had happened. I had just _touched_ a Night Fury.

****And there you have it folks! Review, favourite, follow.****

15. Welcome to MacInroy Castle

****Wow, I'm on a roll. This is like my third update in one week! This chapter is completely centered around Merida. This section (and all the sections after) in William's castle was all inspired because of my vacation. I saw a few medieval castles and that's how this section came to be. William's castle is based off of a castle in the Netherlands called Muiderslot. In reality that castle is much smaller compared to how it's described in this chapter but that's because the real castle was more of a getaway castle than a permanent living space, so I just made it bigger and added some other stuff to it to make it a permanent residence. We'll also be digging a bit deeper into William (like family and past)****

****This will be really random (I know) but noticed that a lot of you commented about how you liked that I incorporated stuff from the books (from Camicazi to using Dragonese) Would you guys believe me if I told you that I have NEVER read the books?****

****Nothing to report except for a lot of new characters. Enjoy!****

****Chapter #15: Welcome to MacInroy Castle****

Merida's POV

At a full gallop, you'd be able to travel between my home and William's within a few hours but we were moving at a much slower pace since we were traveling with a large group and an entourage. Besides myself, Lord MacGuffin, Bhà tair MacGuffin, Lord Dingwall, Cailean Dingwall, Ewan MacIntosh, his wife Anna and his 3 year old daughter Katherine were all coming with us to the north. Bhà tair came with his father to represent his clan and Cailean came for the same reason. Ewan's father wasn't coming along because he had recently fallen ill and was unable to travel long distances and thus, it was up to Ewan to fill his role. Anna, however, came for a more personal reason. She was William's sister-in-law; her brother had once been married to his sister. Anna and Katherine were the only ones that weren't riding a horse, the two were traveling in a small carriage. That's partly why we were moving so slow.

It wasn't until the sun started its descent towards the west that we reached the village that was situated just outside William's castle.

The village was fairly large but all the buildings were simple, the walls made of wood and the roofs of reeds; the richer folk lived within the castle walls. As we rode down the road, the people came to watch us, trying to catch a brief glance of a lifestyle that could never be theirs. When I passed them, they all bowed. I looked at them and gave them a small that wasn't seen by them. Before I knew it, we reached the castle.

It was smaller than my home but still large and just like DunBroch castle, it was ideal for warfare. The castle had a square shape to it, a tower strategically placed at each corner. The walkway into the courtyard was first protected by a thick wooden door and then a drawbridge. If invaders did get past the drawbridge, not only were

they met by another door, this one re-enforced with steel, but from high above in the gate house, the defenders would be able to pour hot oil or stones down at the attackers.

The stone courtyard was large with a fresh water well in the middle. I managed to get a quick look before turning my attention to the people waiting for us. To the north and east was the area where the MacInroy's lived. In the courtyard itself, all tucked away in the shadows, were shops and homes of the richer folk like the blacksmith. I also got a closer look at the towers and noticed that one, the one to the left of the gatehouse, wasn't attached to one of the parapets; probably for some battle strategy that I'd never understand.

After the look, I turned my attention to the people waiting for us. There were a lot of people, none of them staff, but the three in the front caught my attention the most. One was a man, probably in his late 30's or early 40's as a few grays had found its way into his slicked-back black hair. One thing that caught my attention were his eyes. While most people have green eyes, brown, or grey eyes, his appeared to be of a gold color. He was wearing a general's uniform, making him look noble and regal, any metal shining in the setting sun. Standing next to him was a woman.

The woman looked a lot like William with the same black hair and dark brown eyes. She was wearing a black skirt with an overskirt of a deep red; the bodice and trumpet sleeve the same red color. All the red fabric was decorated with flowers of a lighter red color with swirling stems of a dull green. The sleeves under the trumpet sleeves were black as well and puffed and the neckline was wide and black. Around her throat she wore a necklace with a large gold amulet, decorated with pearls shaped like teardrops. She was holding the hand of a small boy, probably around 4 years old.

William dismounted his black stallion but he had hardly reached the ground when the boy let go of the woman's hand and ran to him

"Uncle William!" William spread his arms out and let the boy run into them, lifting him up. He twirled the boy around, causing happy squeals to escape from him

"How's my favorite nephew?" William asked the boy playfully. The boy looked at him.

"Very funny, uncle. I'm your only nephew." William smiled,

"All the more reason." He gave the boy peck on his cheek. With the boy still in his arms, William walked to the woman, who smiled at him. They talked to each other quietly and gave each other a kiss on each cheek; that must be his sister.

As he talked to her, someone had helped me dismount Angus and William had put his nephew down. I slowly approached the two and William must have heard my footsteps as he turned around to look at me. He smiled and took my hand, pulling me gently closer to him and his sister. He spoke when I stood beside him,

"Christine, I'd like you to meet my betrothed: Princess Merida of DunBroch. Merida," I looked at him with surprise; that was the first time he had called me by my name, "I'd like you to meet my sister Christine."

"Your majesty." Christine curtsied low before me. I knew that the curtsy was custom but sometimes I didn't like it. I took hold of her shoulders and lifted her from her bow,

"It's a pleasure to meet you." I said with a smile that she returned, "And please call me Merida." I gave another smile; somehow I knew that Christine was very different than William. Behind us, Anna and Katherine had gotten out of their carriage and approached us, Anna readjusting her fur stole around her shoulders and neck. She looked at William.

Anna seemed to stiffen a little when William met her gaze and quickly shied away, turning her attention to Christine. They greeted each other happily and quickly returned to conversation like they had only been a day apart.

Before long, we all entered the castle, the walls lined with expensive and extravagant tapestries. I was shown to my chambers, which consisted of a few rooms including a bedroom, bathroom, and a room to relax. My belongings were brought up to my room and a few maids, who would attend to me during my time here, helped me change out of my dress into a more extravagant one, surprisingly fast too.

A large celebration had been organized to welcome me and the others to MacInroy castle. Lively music was playing through the hall as we ate from the finest food. I was sitting on a lifted platform at the head table with William to my left. Soon, dinner was finished and I looked at the empty space between the u-shaped set up of the tables, watching Christine's son (whose name was Seán²ras) and Katherine dance playfully to the music, cradling a chalice of wine. After watching the children for a while, I looked around the tables and my sight fell on Christine.

She had changed into a different dress too. Her skirt was gold with red embroidery while the overskirt, the bodice and trumpet sleeves were purple and decorated with gold flowers and green stems. The sleeves under the trumpet sleeves were the same as the skirt. That one dress cost more than what blacksmith would earn in 10 years. That came as no surprise. Not only were the MacInroys powerful, they were rich, very rich and that was something they liked to show off. They doused themselves in expensive wines and rare spices like pepper, bought the finest silks and the most expensive colors and miraculously William always managed to stay out of debt.

At one point during the evening, William stood up and announced that they were going to dance; I was his partner of course. The dance we did was very similar to the one that I danced with Hendry during gathering Jack and Rapunzel had organized but it was still different as that was a dance for the common folk and this was for the nobility.

I did the dance without flaw and William equally so. At the end of the dance, he lifted me but when I looked down, I didn't see William. I didn't see his black hair or his brown eyes. My heart started to pound when I saw the brown hair and green eyes of Hendry.

****Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Merida is seeing Hiccup! It's probably not that**

big of a deal but the reason I didn't describe Merida's dress for the celebration is because the design was so complex with details and such that it became very hard for me to describe. However, I will post a picture of the dress I had in mind on my DA account, along with the dresses that Christine wears. Review, favorite, follow.**

EDIT: For some reason a letter was removed from Christine's son's name. It's actually SeÃ²ras not Seras

16. Revenge and Revelry

**I'm definitely on a roll. This is like my 4th update in a span of little less than 2 weeks (I think). I fun this a fun chapter to write. There's a little bit more interaction with Toothless and Hiccup and we check up on Mavis. Also, a lot of characters are named in the chpt and you should know that NONE of them are OC's.
**

Nothing to report here except that there is a lot of singing in this chapter and one is a bit suggestive. Anywho, enjoy!

Chapter #16

Hiccup's POV

It was a miracle that I hadn't fallen behind on work despite the fact that I visited Toothless on a daily basis. It was even more miraculous that I had time for an extra project: making a prosthetic tail for Toothless. It was just like his own tail in shape and size expect this one was made of leather and metal. It took me a whole night to make and I was quite proud of it.

I was on my way back to the cove with a basket full of assorted kinds of fish slung over my shoulder.

During the walk, my mind drifted to the dragon training the Viking children start doing when they were 15. I had never done dragon training because I was 14 when I left Berk, the place of my birth, for Scotland

Maybe it was a good thing that I had never done dragon training. That training was how to fight and kill dragons not train them.

Though I had never had the opportunity to do dragon training, I've often enough taken a few glimpses into the Book of Dragons, a book filled with everything we know about dragons. The only reason I got a few glimpses is because the book was owned by the man who taught me most of what I know about blacksmithing.

I remembered that dragons are classified into 7 classes: Stoker, Boulder, Fear, Sharp, Tidal, Mystery, and Strike.

The Stoker class is characterized as dangerous fire-breathers. The Monstrous Nightmare can set its own body on fire while a Terrible Terror is sneaky but small; most Terrors don't get much bigger then a cat.

Boulder class are tough, rock-eating dragons. The Gronckle can eat

rocks, heat them to extreme high temperature, and spew them out like molten lava. A Whispering Death attacks from underground and uses its rotating teeth to create underground tunnels.

The Fear class dragons are very dangerous as they are known to be sneaky and deadly at the same time. Many of the Fear dragons have more than one head. The Hideous Zippleback has two heads while a Snaptrapper has four.

Sharp class dragons possess razor sharp quality. The Deadly Nadder has poisonous spikes on their tail that they can whip at you very fast. The Timberjack is perhaps one of the largest dragons in existence. Its wings are so large and so sharp that they could cut through the trees of a small forest within seconds!

Tidal class are dragons that live in the water. A Scauldron will swallow water, heat it in its giant, cauldron-like belly and then spew it out at a high velocity. A Thunderdrum can glide swiftly through the water and, instead of fire, breaths out powerful sonic blasts that could easily make a man deaf.

The Mystery class dragons are really a mystery; no one really knows what these dragons can do. It is known that the Changewing can change its color to blend in with their surrounding environment while the Boneknapper collects the bones of dead dragons in order to create the ultimate armor for themselves.

Toothless and the Skrill that attacked him were part of the Strike class. The Strike class dragons are categorized as dragons with a light-type of body, pin-point accuracy, unstoppable attacks, unbelievable endurance and lightning speed.

My lessons in dragons in my mind ended when I entered the cove and walked to where Toothless usually was: by the large boulder.

"Hey Toothless." I called out in singsong as I slid the basket off my shoulder and placed it down, "Look what I brought." I placed my good foot on the basket, "I hope you're hungry." I kicked the basket and the content spilled out, "Ok, that's disgusting." I murmured to myself as the smell of fish overwhelmed my nostrils. Toothless smelled the fish aroma and slowly approached but surprisingly his attention wasn't on the fish. It was in the contraption in my hands

"_What's da?_" He asked, sniffing the leather and metal.

"Something that'll hopefully make you fly again." I said. Toothless ear plates perked up at the thought that he would be able to fly again, "Now, eat up." I motioned to the fish and Toothless began to dig his nose into the various types of fish I brought, "There's salmon, cod, herring, and I even managed to get an eel." Toothless bared his teeth and started to growl. I picked up the slimy, black fish and held it up, earning a screech from the dragon. 'Whoa!' I called out and quickly threw the eel out of our sight. Toothless became content in an instant, "Sorry," I muttered, as I made my way to his broken tail.

As I walked, I looked every few seconds to see what Toothless was doing. Every time was the same: eating.

When I reached the tail, I placed the contraption down beside it and scooted it closer but when I did, the tail moved away. I tried again and the same happened. The game repeated a few times, each time different, and by the 4th try, I had climbed onto his tail and strapped the contraption onto it.

* * *

><p>Toothless knew that the human had climbed onto his tail. As soon as he did, a plot for revenge brooded. The Night Fury hadn't forgotten that the human had teased him by stepping on the lines of his artwork. It was payback time.

_The Night Fury spread his wings and shot into flight. _

_He felt a satisfaction when he heard Hendry scream and clung onto his tail with all his might but fear hit the dragon when he started to fall again. He was inches from the ground when he suddenly shot up into the sky and heard Hendry yell, "I did it!" _

Toothless turned and flew back into the cove, flying over the lake. He glanced at the human and flicked his tail as hard as he could. Hendry skidded over the lake like a rock while Toothless glided a little longer before crashing into the lake too. As Hendry cheered and laughed, Toothless thought, "Revenge complete."

* * *

><p>Third Person POV<p>

Heather was running from her through the town at a high speed; she was late. She came running into the Transylvanian inn, tying an apron around her waist,

"Heather!" She heard Cairbre yell from a corner of the inn, "You're late!" Heather took little notice of his yell; even if she was early he wouldn't be happy with her. Who would be happy to have their bastard work under the same roof? Nobody, even Cairbre. Heather was Cairbre's bastard daughter; she was the result of a brief affair after Mavis' mother, Martha, died in childbirth. After Heather was born, it was up to her mother to raise her and miraculously Cairbre had given Heather a job when she was older. Heather ran into the kitchen and found Mavis stirring in the large pot filled with stew.

"Dad angry at you again?" Mavis asked. Heather scoffed and rolled her eyes,

"When isn't he?" Mavis couldn't help but release a small chuckle,

"How's your mother?" She asked. Heather's mother had been very sick lately and Heather was the only one that would take care of her; Cairbre had cut off all contact with her after the affair.

"She's doing better." Heather replied as she picked up the bowls Mavis had been filling.

"Those are going to the table in the corner closest by the door." Mavis said. Heather nodded and walked away to the table

As Heather walked out, music started playing. Heather didn't need to guess who was playing the music, it was always the same people: Mavis' uncles. They would always play the liveliest music and sing the funniest songs. The drumming was often done by Ivor, a short man with curly red hair and a declining eyesight. The fiddle and lute were done by Malcolm and Fionnghall. Malcolm was average height with a fat belly and bold green eyes while Fionnghall was a hulking man with such a large girth that hardly anybody could fully wrap their arms around him. Any other instruments was played by Wallace, a man with a hunched back and who probably held the record of father with the most children. He had 19 children, majority of them boys.

The four men gave each other a look and Ivor began a beat by drumming on a slab of wood. They all started to sing as the second bar finished.

_What will we do with a drunken sailor?
>What will we do with a drunken sailor?
What will we do with a drunken sailor?
>Early in the morning!

They sang the last line in harmony; they always sung the last line of any section together.

The others joined on their instruments, the beat picking up. The people started to clap along and some started to dance even.

_Way hay and up she rises,
>Way hay and up she rises,
Way hay and up she rises,
>Early in the morning!

Malcolm stepped up to sing, Wallace tickling his large belly in the middle

_Shave his belly with a rusty razor,
>Shave his belly with a rusty razor,
Shave his belly with a rusty razor,
>Early in the morning!

_Way hay and up she rises,
>Way hay and up she rises,
Way hay and up she rises,
>Early in the morning!

Now, Wallace stepped forward for his part

_Put him in a long boat till his sober,
>Put him in a long boat till his sober,
Put him in a long boat till his sober,
>Early in the morning!

Way hay and up she rises,
>Way hay and up she rises,
>Way hay and up she rises,
>Early in the morning!

And they just played, the music never losing its upbeat tune.

Mavis had joined the revelry earlier and now a friend of hers, Jonathan, had grabbed her hand and the two were dancing together.

Heather smiled at the sight of the two; had Mavis not fallen for Onceler, she probably would've married Jonathan. Heather looked back at the musicians. Fionnghall stepped forward

_Stick him in a scupper with a hosepipe on him,
>Stick him in a scupper with a hosepipe on him,
Stick him in a scupper with a hosepipe on him,
>Early in the morning!

_Way hay and up she rises,
>Way hay and up she rises,
Way hay and up she rises,
>Early in the morning!

Lastly, Ivor held his head up to sing, never ceasing the beat of the drum

_Put him in the bed with the captains daughter,
>Put him in the bed with the captains daughter,
Put him in the bed with the captains daughter,
>Early in the morning!

The beat picked up slightly and the men sang the last bit of the song all together, harmonizing each last line of each section

_Way hay and up she rises,
>Way hay and up she rises,
Way hay and up she rises,
>Early in the morning!

_That's what we do with a drunken sailor,
>That's what we do with a drunken sailor,
That's what we do with a drunken sailor,
>Early in the morning!

_Way hay and up she rises,
>Way hay and up she rises,
Way hay and up she rises,
>Early in the morning!

_Way hay and up she rises,
>Way hay and up she rises,
Way hay and up she rises,
>Early in the morning!

As they finished the whole tavern burst into cheers, from happy ones to drunken ones. Heather clapped along briefly before returning to her work. Mavis, however, went to the musicians,

"You sounded amazing, Uncle!" She squealed as she hugged Fionnghall as best as she could. The large man smiled and patted her head lightly,

"Thank you, Mavis." She looked up and smiled, "Now, can you get a tankard for these old men?" He asked with a smirk as he motioned to himself and the others. Mavis nodded and disappeared to get the drinks. Fionnghall watched the girl walk away as her father joined beside him, "She's grown into a fine young woman. If only Martha were here to see her."

"She is always here." Cairbre said quietly as he moved his hand over his heart. The two stood in silence for a long time, simply staring out at the tavern scene in front of them. Cairbre shook out of his trance when Wallace tapped on his shoulder.

"Cairbre, why don't you sing a song?" Wallace suggested. Cairbre instantly shook his head,

"No, no. I haven't sung since Martha died." He protested as Mavis rejoined the group of men with a tray carrying 5 tankards. All the men grabbed a tankard. Mavis looked up at her dad, having heard the conversation,

"Oh, dad. Please? I've never heard you sing before and I heard from Aunt Eithne and Aunt Wanda that you used to sing so well." At that statement, everyone in the inn started to cheer and encourage Cairbre to sing, the ones that had heard him before were the loudest. Mavis and Wallace gave each other a look; they knew that Cairbre couldn't refuse now.

"Which song, Cairbre?" Wallace asked with a smile. Cairbre put down his tankard and shook his head.

"This one doesn't need music, only clapping along with the beat." Wallace and Mavis alike knew instantly which song Cairbre was going to sing: The Drunken Scotsman. It was a popular song. Cairbre lifted his hands in the air, the inn grew quieter than the dead.

Well a Scotsman clad in kilt left a bar one evening fair

He started, many beginning to clap, loud enough to be audible but not loud enough to overpower Cairbre,

_And one could tell by how he walked that he'd drunk more than his share

>He fumbled round until he could no longer keep his feet
Then he stumbled off into the grass to sleep beside the street _

Many joined the next line, raising their glasses in drunken cheerfulness

_Ring ding diddle diddle I de oh ring di diddly I oh

>He stumbled off into the grass to sleep beside the street

Cairbre began to move around the tavern, circling in-between tables and people, doing the actions in the song.

_About that time two young and lovely girls just happened by

>And one says to the other with a twinkle in her eye
'See yon sleeping Scotsman so strong and handsome built

>I wonder if it's true what they don't wear beneath the kilt'

Some men cheered at the last statement while some of the ladies began to blush,

_Ring ding diddle diddle I de oh ring di diddly I oh

>'I wonder if it's true what they don't wear beneath the kilt'

_They crept up on that sleeping Scotsman quiet as could be

>Lifted up his kilt about an inch so they could see

Cairbre walked by an unsuspecting young man and hit his kilt up, some people jeering at the embarrassment of the man

_And there behold, for them to view, beneath his Scottish skirt

>Was nothing more than God had graced him with upon his birth

The men burst into yells and cheers as they joined for the next line

_Ring ding diddle diddle I de oh ring di diddly I oh

>Was nothing more than God had graced him with upon his birth

_They marvelled for a moment, then one said 'we must be gone

>Let's leave a present for our friend, before we move along'
As a gift they left a blue silk ribbon, tied into a bow

>Around the bonnie star, the Scot's kilt did lift and show
Ring ding diddle diddle I de oh ring di diddly I oh

>Around the bonnie star, the Scot's kilt did lift and show

_Now the Scotsman woke to nature's call and stumbled toward the trees

>Behind a bush, he lifts his kilt and gawks at what he sees
And in a startled voice he says to what's before his eyes.

>'O lad I don't know where you been but I see you won first prize'

The tavern exploded with noise.

_Ring ding diddle diddle I de oh ring di diddly I oh

>'O lad I don't know where you been but I see you won first prize'

Cairbre held the last note as the whole inn burst into cheers. Heather clapped and cheered too, the corners of her lips going up into a bright smile. But her happy demeanour disappeared when she looked at Mavis and the hand that was moving self-consciously to her stomach.

You guys can probably guess what's up with Mavis. Next update should be pretty quick too 'cause I've got a lot written out for that one as well. The first song that was sung is called "Drunken Sailor" by the Irish Rovers (don't ask) and the second one is called the "Drunken Scotsman." by the same group. Review, favourite, follow.

17. The Past and the Present

**There'll be a lot of new characters introduced within the next few chapters but most of them will probably be a one-timer. One-timer will be the word I'm going to use to describe a character that'll appear once (maybe twice) in a story and then is never mentioned again. For example, Fionnghall, Wallace, Ivor, and Malcolm from last chapter will most likely be one-timers. **

**True story: I was watching HTTYD a little while ago and I'm finding it impossible to watch it without invoking some things from this

fiction. Same with Brave.**

Nothing to report this chapter. Enjoy!

Chapter #17: The Past and the Present

Third Person POV

He was hardly back for a day but William was already engulfed with his duties as Lord. His most trusted general, Kozmotis Pitchiner, had informed him that a bordering village had been raided by bandits. Kozmotis Pitchiner had served the MacInroy family for 16 years; 13 of those years under William. His bravery and loyalty was unquestioned and as a reward, William had showered him with wealth and had given him the honor of being present when the Princess arrived.

William was now in the main hall, sitting back in his chair, listening to the figure in front of him. Kozmotis had visited the raided village and brought back witnesses to recount the event to William.

A 14-year-old boy named James 'Jamie' Bennett was telling William what he saw,

"They rampaged through my village, my lord. They killed anyone in their way and took anything of value. They even ransacked the local church and took the relics and chalices for mass. Afterwards they set everything on fire." The boy visibly shuddered as he recounted the events. A girl, not even 10 years old, stepped to the boy and hugged him from behind, hoping it would comfort him. William watched the little girl, figuring she was the boy's little sister.

"Did you see the leaders of the raid? Did they leave anything behind?" Jamie looked at William and shook his head,

"No, my lord." William frowned his forehead. None of the witnesses had seen the leaders to the raid nor had any found a sign of who it could be. He looked back at the children, noticing the ragged clothing they were wear and thin, bony bodies. William motioned to a nearby maid to come. She obliged,

"Take these children to the kitchens and give them something to eat, they look half-famished" He whispered to her. The maid nodded, gave a quick bow and led the children away through a door. With a sigh, William stood up and looked to the general, "Kozmotis, ready your horse. We're riding out."

* * *

><p>Still Third Person POV

The village looked worse than William had imagined. Every home, every building was little more than a heap of burned wood and ashes. The few buildings that were still standing had doors ripped off of its hinges, patches of roof missing, all the belongings thrown on the street. Animals had been released during the raid and were scurrying around. People walked everywhere, trying to find missing belongings or anything of value.

The two men rode quietly through the town, both staring at the damage

that was done. William was in such a trance that he didn't notice Kozmotis dismounting his horse and grabbing something from the ground,

"My lord," Kozmotis called out. William stopped his horse, "you may want to look at this." The general handed the lord a piece of folded white cloth, covered in soot, grime and dirt. William took the cloth and unfolded it, reading the single letter that was on there. He looked at the general, both men knowing the meaning of the letter. The letter, an N, was the mark left behind by the most notorious bandit on MacInroy land: Nicholas St. North.

"Any sign of Rider?" William asked as he refolded the cloth. Flynn Rider was St. North's accomplice but he hardly ever let a sign behind. When he did, it was always different, sometimes it being as silly as leaving behind an iron pan with his initials branded into them. Kozmotis shook his head,

"None, my lord."

* * *

><p>Merida's POV

When I woke up that morning, I thought at first that it was Rapunzel that woke me and was scurrying around my room but then I realized that I wasn't in my own room at home. The one that woke me up would be my personal maid during my stay. She was short with black hair, a small body, and amethyst eyes. Her name was Annalise but everybody had given her the strange nickname of 'Tooth'. Apparently, Annalise had been a strong believer of the Tooth Fairy when she was younger and thus everybody began to call her 'Tooth'. After the believe diminished, the nickname stayed. I liked her a lot but she sometimes got a little too excited and then she'd talk so fast that I couldn't understand her.

Later the same day in the kemenade, I sat quietly with Anna and Christine. Anna was silently doing some embroidery while Christine was playing a ballad on her lute to her son. I believe it was called the "Ballad of Two Lovers".

It was one of the most loved and well-known stories in DunBroch. I remember my mom used to tell me this story when I was younger. She told me it showed the nature of love but I never gave this much thought.

The story goes like this: in an unknown land, there once lived a man and a woman. The woman was the only child of a wealthy lord and landowner and the man worked for her father as a serf. They met on the outskirts of the property. The two quickly became good friends and soon much stronger feelings began to grow. Under a full moon, they confessed their feelings for each other and shared their first kiss. The two continued to meet in secret. The woman continuously feared they'd be discovered but that fear was quickly dismissed whenever she saw him.

One night, the two were in a beautiful cove. The man asked the woman "what value is there in life if we're not together?" Before the woman could reply, the man asked her to marry him. Thought she knew her family would never accept him, the woman said yes. The next night,

they eloped but they were caught before they even reached the next village. The man was accused of kidnapping the woman and was executed shortly afterwards. Depressed and devastated, the woman killed herself. It is a sad story but all turns out well in the end. After the woman kills herself, she is reunited with the man in the heavens and they could now be together forever.

The childhood memories of the story brought a smile to my face briefly but disappeared again when I thought of my mother. I missed her. And my dad, my brothers, Rapunzel, and... Hendry.

I took in a deep breath when I thought about the blacksmith. I missed him a lot. His laughter, everything. He was my best friend but at the same time, is he really just a friend? I dismissed the thought from my mind. A blacksmith and a princess could not be together. Even if I had feeling for him and he for me, I'm betrothed.

I banished Hendry from my mind and thought instead about Rapunzel. I missed her too. I wished she could've come with me but William forbade it. He didn't want an Anglo-Saxon to step onto his land. I've never understood why William hated anyone that wasn't a Scot so much. The moral contributed to it but the hatred was greater still. I looked at Christine, who was cuddling her son,

"Christine, where does William's hatred of the Anglo-Saxons stem from?" Christine looked up and was stunned to silence by my question, "I-I know there the moral but is there anything else?" Christine remained silent for a while before putting her son down,

"SeÃ²ras, why don't you go outside and play with Katherine?" The boy nodded,

"Ok, mama." He giggled and ran out the door. Christine followed him to it and closed the wooden door,

"Well, first you have to understand that the moral wasn't always what it is now." Christine started, her voice traced by a solemn tone. As she explained, she walked to the window, "Pure-blooded has always been the same but when my father was still alive, pure-minded was that anyone that wasn't a pure-blood shouldn't be treated as an equal." I listened intently to the story, hardly believing what I was hearing. Christine briefly looked out the window, her eyes scanning the vast land before turning around to look at me, "You might find it hard to believe but these lands used to be overflowing with Anglo-Saxons and Vikings." Christine smiled when she saw my mouth open slightly in surprise. She continued, "My father, Lord Robert, took the moral very seriously and never treated a non-Scot as an equal and the way he did it was by paying a non-Scot less than half of what a Scot earned. The Vikings didn't mind too much since they still lived under the same system as they had in the archipelago, which was living off of the land; their system didn't revolve around earning money. But the Anglo-Saxons were furious." She walked back to her chair and sat back down slowly, the memories returning to her no doubt,

"A day after my youngest brother, Boyd, was born, a mob stormed the castle in the middle of the night. They rummaged through each room and took anything of value. Graham, my eldest brother, William, and I hid from the mob while my father assembled the guards and tried to get to my mother and baby brother but it was too late. They had

killed them with no mercy." Christine wiped her eyes. I couldn't imagine what it would be like if I lost my brothers or my mother. The relationship between me and my mom is far from ideal but I couldn't imagine losing her forever,

"I'm sorry." I said quietly. Christine smiled,

"It's alright, it happened a long time ago." She was silent for a moment, "My father fought down the rebellion and the leaders were executed. Shortly afterwards, every Anglo-Saxon was banished from our land. The next 2 years were spent in peace and quiet but then the war came. Before they could do any real damage, every Viking was slaughtered; that's how the massacre started. My father and brother rode out to fight the invading Vikings but they had no idea what they were up against. They had no idea that the Outcasts had invaded. Their overconfidence led to their downfall; they were both killed within a year." They had lost their father, their mother and two brother in less than 3 years. How do you cope with that? "William inherited the MacInroy lands and the title of "lord" when he was 15."

"He was 15?" I asked with disbelief.

"Yes and he created miracles for us. With William leading the army and the brilliance of General Pitchiner, the Outcasts were quickly defeated and their leader assassinated. After the victory, we stepped down as a neutral party. With William in charge, we flourished. We became wealthier and stronger; it wouldn't be long before the Vikings targeted us. They knew that if we were to align ourselves with DunBroch, they'd have no hope for victory. In the second last year of the war, 4 Viking clans attacked: Lava Louts, Meatheads, Berserkeres, and Hairy Hooligans (or rather what was left of them). But luck wasn't on William's side this time. He lost battle after battle, losing more men than he could replace. He realized that he needed allies; that's how I came to be married to Niall, Anna's brother." Anna and I exchanged a brief glance as Christine walked back to the window as she no doubt remembered memories of her dead husband, "William held great admiration for my husband. They became close friends, even closer than William is to Artair. They rode into war together and any could've sworn that they were invincible. But during the last great battle of the war, where all the clans joined together to fight, my husband was killed. William went into mourning with me. By this time, William wasn't the man he used to be. He had lost his father, his mother, his brothers, and his closest friend. After the mourning period, he enforced the current version of the moral. He claimed it was in honor of his deceased loved ones." She sat back down in the chair, looking at the floor, "I've never agreed with this version of the moral."

"If you don't like it, then why don't you say something about it? William listens to you, doesn't he?" I asked quickly. William must listen to Christine, she was his sister. Christine shook her head,

"He listens to no one but Artair. He'll believe that man's every word. And you want to know why I don't say anything?" She pointed to herself to add emphasis, "I realized that if I didn't play the game the way William wanted, he'd not only hurt me but my son as well. He may love Seán until death but that doesn't mean he safe from William's wrath. As a mother, you do anything to keep your child

safe, even if it means going against everything you stand for and believe in." I looked at Anna briefly. She had stiffened up again, biting her lip, and fiddling with her hands nervously. I looked back when Christine spoke, "I'm as trapped as you are."

****Don't have anything to say. Review, favorite, follow.****

18. AN NOTE

****AN NOTE****

I know some of you will be a bit angry at me for what I'm going to do but please, hear me out.

I'm going on a hiatus for a little while. I heard today that someone close and very dear to me has had a very bad stroke and has gone into one of those vegetable states. I'm not completely sure what's going on but from what I've gathered is that he's probably not coming out of that state and even if he did, he'd be too weak to the fight the cancer he has.

I've no idea how long I'll be gone but it'll probably be for a little while.

I'll see you guys soon. Hopefully.

19. AN NOTE 2

****AN NOTE #2****

You guys have no idea how grateful and overwhelmed I am by you guys' support and love. But I received the news that that person who was very dear to me (who is my uncle) has died. I'm feeling a little down in the dumps right now but I know I'll be fine. I've been through stuff like this before but it's been a few years.

I am going to keep writing (I know my uncle would've wanted me to keep writing them because he read my fanfictions and loved them) but his passing has to find a place first.

See you guys soon.

20. Flight

****I'm back, faster than I thought I would. I can't thank you guys enough for all the love and support you gave me when my uncle died. It really helped me through it. The reviews brought smiles to my face, seeing strangers help strangers. The ones that really brought a smile to my face were the ones that referred to me as if I was a guy. Yes, I am a girl so that mystery is gone. If you were one of those people, do me a favor. Don't apologize, you didn't know that I was a girl. If you want you can keep referring to me as a guy, I really don't care.****

****Anyway, I had fun with this chapter, despite the writer's block I had with it. Only now did I realize that I placed Hiccup's prosthetic on the wrong leg. I thought it was the right leg but it's actually**

his left. So you probably can guess that any right has been changed to left. If I missed any, let me know.**

Ok, I have a serious question and I'd appreciate a serious answer. How do you guys like the idea of me converting this fiction to a novel? I realize that I have to change a lot to prevent being sued for copyright but in general?

**Nothing to report really except that some of you might have a few feels. Enjoy! **

Chapter #18: Flight

The days in DunBroch passed like everyday does: quietly and nothing out of the norm. One rose at sunrise and laid back down when the day was done. All did this. Well, all except one.

Hendry wasn't only living the life of a Scottish blacksmith and a Viking in hiding. He was now living the life of a dragon rider too. After the small success of the prosthetic tail, Hendry had worked each and every night on projects that he hoped would make it possible for Toothless to fly and for Hendry to ride Toothless.

First, he made a saddle for himself but when Hendry presented the saddle to the dragon, Toothless ran around the cove with the blacksmith chasing him. It took an hour but Hendry eventually strapped the saddle to Toothless' back.

Next, Hendry attached a long rope to the fake tail and got Toothless into flight. When they were gliding, he pulled on the rope, hoping the dragon would turn right. He shot to the left, causing the rider to fall into the lake. His project that night was a riding vest that could be attached to the saddle to prevent falls.

_Hendry tried the rope again, this time tied to his prosthetic but once again, dragon and rider crashed, unfortunately on the hard ground. Hendry gained a plethora of bruises due to the fall and decided that, after he perfected the flying gear, he would upgrade the vest to leather armor. _

Days passed with trials and error, parts were added and parts were removed. The contraptions and equipment that now donned the dragon looked unnatural but it was necessary for the dragon to be able to fly, even though he could only do so with Hendry.

In this time, Hendry figured out how to properly maneuver Toothless' tail. A line leading from the tail to a paddle operated by Hendry's prosthetic could open and close the tail. He figured out what different positions did to Toothless' flight. One position would make Toothless fly up, another turn, and another glide. By the end of this process, there were 6 different positions.

But it wasn't only training that the two did. Hendry found a more playful side to the dragon when some metal casted a reflection of light on the ground and the dragon started chasing it. Hendry also discovered that Toothless loved it when he scratched his neck and under his chin. They also began to understand each other better. Hendry could understand the strange words of the dragon while Toothless began to understand human better.

The more the two spent time together, the stronger their bond grew.

By the time Hendry decided it was time for the first flight, they were inseparable.

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

The wind in my hair, the world below me, the sky with me. It was an incredible feeling. It felt like freedom, like all my woes were being blown away.

"Alright, Bud," I said, briefly leaning forward to pat the dragon's neck, "We're going to take this nice and slow."

"_Me not too fond of slow_" Toothless whined. I rolled my eyes as I looked at the piece of parchment that attached to the saddle. All the positions were drawn out on it,

"We'll speed up soon enough. Alright," I sighed, "Position 3- No, 4!" I adjusted the paddle to the right spot and the tail changed position. I guide Toothless through a slow and wide right turn. During the turn, I checked if the saddle and the straps keeping me on it were not falling apart. They were just fine, "How are you feeling, Toothless?" I asked. He didn't reply but only needed to hear a croon to know that he was happy that he wasn't grounded anymore. I looked back at the disappearing shore and the prosthetic tail, "Alright." I whispered. I leant forward and led Toothless down towards the ocean, "Come on, Bud!" I encouraged. He straightened out just before the waterline and brushed his wing into the water then the other wing, causing sprays of white. We flew under a large arch of jutting rock and a few gulls joined above us, cawing loudly.

We shot by them in seconds,

"Yes! It worked!" I exclaimed, talking about making it through the arch rather than beating the birds.

"_Look out!_" Toothless screeched but it was too late to avoid a minor crash with a jutting rock. As we regained flight, I yelled,

"Sorry!" But I didn't notice the second rock until we crashed into that one too, "Sorry," I said again, "That was my fault." Toothless let out an annoyed groan and he whacked his ear plate into my face,

"Stupid human. Do it right next time!"

"Yeah, I got it!" I retorted. I quickly checked the paddle to my good foot before looking back to the parchment, "Ok, position 4- uh, 3." Toothless snorted as I pulled him up. Higher and higher we flew up, so close to the clouds you could touch them, "Yeah," I yelled with ecstasy, "Go, Toothless!" We flew even higher, "Oh, this is amazing! The wind in my- CHEATSHEET!" The parchment had blown loose from the saddle. I was barely able to catch it but I made the mistake to yell 'stop'. Toothless stopped flying and the momentum caused the straps to detach themselves from the saddle, causing me to fall off of

Toothless. We made eye contact as we began to fall back to earth, "NO!" I yelled. Toothless began to wriggle, trying to straighten himself, "Oh gods!" I screamed as I passed him, hitting the edge of his wing hard, "Oh, no!"

"_Hendry!_" Toothless screamed and he managed to briefly angle himself so he was falling right beside me but he quickly lost control and began to spin in circles. I tried to tell him what to do but the wind was so loud he couldn't hear me. He finally realized that he was doing something wrong when his tail slapped across my face.

He straightened out, somewhat, and I managed to get above him and get a hold of the saddle. With much struggle, I managed to set myself back on it and reattached the straps. I stuffed the parchment into my mouth and pulled with all my might to straighten the Night Fury to prevent a collision with the water. We barely skimmed across the water but headed towards a maze of jutting stones. I looked at the parchment, the wind causing it to move so much it was impossible to decipher. I glimpsed at the rock, the parchment, and let it go.

I lowered my body and entered the maze. I switched the paddle rapidly and excellent precision as if I had been doing this for years. Position 4, 2, 5, briefly back to 4 and then to 2 and we were out of the maze.

As soon as we glided, I threw my arms in the air and yelled out in joy. I had done it! I flew with Toothless and came out with it with only a bruise that would surely appear on my jaw.

Toothless must have been happy too with the achievement as he sent a blast of plasma ahead of us. To my surprise, the flames started rolling back! I pulled Toothless up, barely able to dodge the flames,

"What was that for?!" But the dragon just laughed.

We kept flying, slowly drifting further away for the Scottish lands. After flying for hours and hours, we had found a small beach with an island surrounded by mist behind it to land on and rest. With a small fire crackling at my feet, I leaned back against Toothless and watched as the sun slowly fell towards the ocean to make room for the moon. Toothless had his head perched on his front paws and had his large eyes closed but he wasn't sleeping. The time passed slowly and quietly. The serenity ended when Toothless' nostrils flared and he lifted his head to smell the air.

"What is it?" I asked as he stood up and continued to smell. As he spoke, I stood up and walked up to stand beside his head,

"_Me smell something." _He turned his head towards the mist covered island and smelled again.

"What?" I asked as I looked into the same direction as he was.

"_You._"

"Toothless! I'm standing right beside you!" I yelled. He began to walk calmly towards the rest of the island, into the mist. I watched him disappear before I smelled myself, "And I don't smell that bad!"

I yelled but got no reply. I stood still for a moment, waiting for Toothless to either say something or come back. When he did neither, I followed. As I walked into the mist, it seemed to retreat. I eventually came to a large wall of rock but Toothless was nowhere to be seen. Using lower areas, I walked to the surface of the wall that housed a large forest. A wide area of snapped branches told me where Toothless had walked. I followed the trail.

Everything was silent.

"_Hiccup!_" A voice screamed but it wasn't Toothless'. I gasped and spun around, something white disappearing fast. Breathing heavily, I continued walking but quickly fell when my prosthetic hooked onto a branch. Laughter rang in my ears, cruel laughter,

"_He's going to be the next chief?_"

"'_Hiccup the Useless' couldn't suit him better_."

"_So pathetic. And he calls himself a Viking?_"

I recognized the voices. They were the voices of people from Berk, people who have been gone for a long, _long _time. With watered eyes but no tears, I got up.

The rest of the walk happened quietly and the voices of the past stayed their torment. The forest soon gave away to a large open field, the mist completely gone.

This island once supported a village as there were many burned homes, some still had a frame of black wood while others were little more than a few lines of ash. A overgrown path led through the middle towards various sections of the village.

I walked to what clearly used to be the town center as it was circular and had no evidence that there ever had been a building there.

A large set of nearby stairs lead to a building that seemed to be build into a mountain, the wooden doors and the wooden statues that stood guard beside it were worn but still in good shape.

It looked awfully familiar.

I continued in a different direction, towards the highest part of the village. There I saw Toothless, his nose sniffing the ruins of the largest house I had seen so far.

"Toothless?" I joined beside him and saw what he had been smelling: a small stuffed toy, "What have you found here?" I picked it up and examined it. It was small, covered in ash and grime, and was shaped like a dragon. Runic writing was stitched into the side for decoration. Though I hadn't read runes in years, I didn't take long to figure out what the writing said,

Hiccup.

"Impossible." I mumbled with disbelief, recognizing that the toy had once been mine. Clutching it tightly, I looked out to the ruined village. I tried to imagine repaired houses, a smithy, large torches,

people. "Twelve days north of Hopeless." I whispered as the houses magically began to repair themselves, "Few degrees south of Freezing to Death" Smoke rose from the smithy's chimney and the walkway to the docks was repaired. I stopped breathing when I saw the ghostly figures of the inhabitants, going about their daily business. "Meridian of Misery." I looked at the toy then back at the ghost town.

This is - this _was _Berk.

* * *

><p>Rapunzel's POV

The sun had already set when Jack came back from a meeting with Aileen. Along with its usual topic of where Vikings were hiding, which had to be moved, and which could flee, Jack had been called to the meeting to inform him that Jack and I didn't have to use our codenames anymore, Sax for Jack and Ang for me. He had also been given the good news that Tuffnut, Ruffnut, and Rannveig had made it safely to England. According to the man that had met up with them at the wall, Tuffnut, as soon as they were across, had collapsed to the ground and kissed it, muttering in Norse, "We are free at last."

We were sitting quietly by the table, me spinning wool and Jack playing 'Scarborough Fair' on his fiddle. As he played, I hummed along and sang the words in my head,

_Are you going to Scarborough fair?

>Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme
Remember me to one who lives there

>He once was a true love of mine

Tell him to make me a cambric shirt

>Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme

>Without no seam nor needlework

>Then he'll be a true love of mine

Tell him to find me an acre of land

>Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme

>Between the salt water and-

The knocking at the door broke the song. Jack placed the fiddle and the bow on the table and walked to the door to answer the knock. I looked to the door when he opened it but all I saw was a figure clad in a black cloak, their face barely visible under the hood but Jack must've seen it,

"Mavis?" I stood up at the name, placing the spindle and distaff on the table as Mavis entered the room,

"I had nowhere else to go." She said when she had sat down and pulled down the hood, desperation ringing in her voice. As Jack closed the door, I knelt in front of Mavis, placing a hand on her knees,

"What happened?" She looked at me, a tear rolling down her pale cheek,

"I'm pregnant." At that she started to cry. I wrapped my arms around her, trying to comfort her as she cried into my shoulder,

"Who's the father?" I whispered, a feeling in my stomach telling me I already knew the answer. Mavis left the embrace and look down at her hands,

"Onceler." She briefly met my eyes before looking back at her hands. Behind her, Jack placed a hand on her shoulder. I took hold of her hand and gave a comforting squeeze. Jack and I made eye contact and he motioned his head to the side. Giving one last squeeze in Mavis' hand, I joined Jack,

"We have to get her to England." He whispered, "If Cairbre finds out, he'll kill her. If I can get Aran to a full gallop, I can ride to England in less than two hours." Aran was one of the horses used by the messengers. She was one of the fastest horses in DunBroch. I nodded,

"Go. The sooner you go the better." He nodded and turned to get his cloak but I grabbed his arm, "Please be careful with her. I don't want her to have a miscarriage." Jack nodded slowly and gave me a quick peck and retrieving his cloak, throwing it around him, and coaxing Mavis with him towards the stables. I watched them disappear into the night, "Safe travels. May God protect you."

* * *

><p>Jack's POV

It had taken three hours to ride to Onceler's house. With Aran, I could easily ride to England in an hour but I had to be careful with Mavis. The house still looked the same as when Rapunzel and I had left 5 years ago. The stables hadn't changed a bit either. Still the same size, the same stalls, nothing had changed. Melvin still had the same stall, the one closest by the door. After giving Aran some food and water, I led Mavis to the front doors of the house. The shutters were closed and the rooms they were hiding were dark. I pounded my fist against the door loudly 3 times. I listened for the familiar creak of the stairs and after a long time of silence, I heard it. The creaking was long and slow. After a moment, the locks behind the door started to move and the door opened. There stood Onceler, half-dressed, with a candle in his hand,

"Jack?" He took a step closer to me, holding the candle closer too, "What are you doing here?" I looked to figure behind me and Onceler's gaze followed. Mavis lifted her head so Onceler could see her face, "Mavis?" He whispered, the disbelief yet happiness evident. Mavis nodded, her eyes starting to water. Onceler handed me the candle and quickly enveloped Mavis in a tight hug. Though I couldn't see it, I knew he was crying. I stood by awkwardly as they embraced each other. For a moment, I thought they'd never let go of each other, so engrossed they were in their embrace. I cleared my throat and the two lovers looked at me,

"You're welcome." I said with a smirk.

And there ya have it folks! I got quite a bit written out for the next chapter so that one will be showing up sometime soon. Review, favourite, follow.

21. Pain

****Sorry this took forever but between school, work, family, swimming competitions, writer's block AND an emotional breakdown, I found very little time to write. My apology is a longer chapter with a confession from Merida and a few characters introduced.****

****I actually asked you guys this last chapter but I got no replies 'bout it, so I might as well ask it again. How do you guys like to the idea of me converting this fanfiction to a novel? I realize that I have to do a lot of converting to prevent being sued for copyright but in general?****

****Now in this chapter, William does some stuff in this chapter that might prove that he isn't a 100% sane. Most of what he does I based off of what I had seen in ****_**Da Vinci's Code**_****. Enjoy the chapter!****

****Warning(s): Self-harm (in a way) and one swear/mature word.****

****Chapter #19: Pain****

Merida's POV

The week went by faster than I had expected. In that time, I had gotten to know William a bit better. I never realized how talented he was until now. He was a master of falconry and horse riding, an excellent swordsman, he spoke Gaelic and Latin flawlessly, he played several instruments, wrote music and much more. The more time I spent with him, the more I realized that he wasn't as bad as he thought he was.

Any time he could spare was with me but today was one of the mornings that he wasn't at the castle and I decided to explore the still mysterious castle. In less than a few hours, I had discovered the laundry room, servant's quarters, and the largest library I had ever seen. I was now walking down a hallway that clearly wasn't used often as everything was covered by a thin layer of dust. I stopped when I found the only door the hallway possessed. I grabbed the old handle and turned it, the metal squeaking. The room was very small with whitewashed walls and no windows, the only light coming from a small candle perched on a stool. The only other objects were a crucifix that hung on the wall, directly above the stool, and a small whip next to the candle.

I had no time to examine as I heard footsteps down the hallway. I quickly hid in the shadows of a corner just as the door opened. I heard the lock click and the one that had entered move towards the stool and kneel down in front of the crucifix. In the faint candle light, I saw William. He began to mutter in Latin, a language I barely understood, holding his hands in prayer. He continued to mutter for a while until he made the sign of the Cross. He lifted his right leg and pulled his kilt up. I couldn't see his thigh but I heard him undo something and a pained gasp escape from him. He put his leg down and lifted the other, pulling his kilt up. Then I saw what he was holding in his hand, a gasp almost escaped from me. In his hand, he held a cilice. I looked away as he wrapped the cilice around his thigh and tightened it, a loud groan of pain escaping from him.

I dared to look again when he stood up, a line of blood slowly moving down his left leg. He looked at the crucifix and took his black shirt off. My hand flew to my mouth when I saw his back. It was covered with thousands of cuts; most of them weren't even fully healed. He muttered something in Latin again but this time, I understood. He said Me a peccato mundare ut verberibus animam meam which roughly translates to "purge me from the sin that plagues my soul."

He grabbed the whip. I looked away and covered my ears as he began to whip himself, the groans and yells of his pain still penetrating my ears. I knew what William was doing: self-flagellation. It was a religious practice where one hurts themselves for penance. After an eternity, William stopped. He breathed heavily through his nose. He just sat there, stiller than a statue as blood trickled from some of the wounds on his back. He grabbed his black shirt and put it back on. He neatly placed everything back to its righteous spot and visibly limped out the door.

It was an eternity before I moved. Still in shock, I left the room and headed towards the stable my pace slowly speeding up.

What had William done that he'd consort himself to this?

* * *

><p>Still Merida's POV

The horror of what I saw didn't leave me no matter how hard I tried. I rode fast on Angus through the forest, low branches snapping at me. When I stopped, I knew I was lost. This wasn't the forest at home; I didn't know this forest. I looked around me nervously. The canopy of trees were so close together that hardly any light reached the forest floor. An owl hooted in the distance and birds fluttered away in fear in the distance

A branch snapped in the brush nearby. Angus threw his head in panic,

"Easy!" I yelled as I stroked his mane but he didn't calm down. Whatever had caused the branch to snap was moving closer, and fast! The thing emerged from the woods before I could even turn the Clydesdale around.

"Well, well, well. What do we have here?" The man in front of me said. I could tell he was a foreigner. His voice had a clear accent and his clothing was unfamiliar. His blue tunic seemed to be wrapped around him and held together by a belt at his waist. His black pants were slight baggy and stuffed into black bucket-top boots. Over it all, he wore a red coat that reached to the top of his boot with black fur on the cuffs. His face had a young, healthy complexion but his hair betrayed he was old. Gray hair had found its way into the brown hair but not yet into the thin moustache or the small pointed goatee. He was starting at me with large, icy blue eyes. I met his gaze briefly before I turned my head at the sound of another voice,

"Looks like nobility to me." A younger man had emerged from the forest, walking into the direction of the older man. He also spoke with an accent but this one I recognized. It was the same as Jack's

and Rapunzel's. This man was Anglo-Saxon. The younger man had similar qualities to the other male but not enough to suggest that they were related. The younger man had dark brown hair, brown eyes, and a scruffy goatee. His clothing would be good for a quick escape but not very well for blending in with one's surroundings. He wore a white shirt with a light blue vest over it and dark beige pants tucked into brown bucket-top boots

"I wonder what brings a high standing lady to the deepest part of the forest." He spoke with his enchanting voice. I held my tongue. It wouldn't be wise to speak to bandits. Both of them stared at me for a while, the older man playing with his goatee. He sighed and looked at the younger man,

"You'd think that after what she did with the suitors, the Princess would be quite the chatterbox." They knew who I was!

"How do you know I'm the princess?" I demanded, turning Angus to try to make him look frightening but the men were unfazed, unafraid of the grown Clydesdale. The younger man crossed his arms,

"With that hair? Not too difficult to find out." I gave him an angry frown but he cocked his eyebrow.

"Who are you?" I asked,

"Oh, where are my manners?" The elder man exclaimed. He gave me a large, sweeping bow, "Nicholas St. North at your service, _Vashe Velichestvo_, but please, call me North." He straightened up, "And this," He grabbed the young man by his vest and turned him to face me, "Is Flynn Rider."

"You're the bandits William keeps talking about!" I yelled, sounding more scared than I actually was.

"Ah, our reputation precedes us!" Flynn laughed, North joining him while I watched them. Angus turned his head and I looked into his eye. Eventually, the two men stopped laughing. North nudged Flynn in his arm,

"Come on. Let's get out of here." They turned around and headed to the bushes but I called out to them,

"You're not going to rob me?" It was a rather odd question to ask but these men were bandits. Why didn't they do what most bandits would do: pull me off the horse and hold me at knifepoint until I gave them what they wanted? Both men stopped and looked at me,

"What's there to rob?" Flynn asked, "The horse is useless to us, you're not wearing any jewelry, and I doubt that a Princess would carry money with her." He crossed his arms again, giving me a look that held the pride of knowing that he was right. I wasn't wearing any jewelry, money I never had with me, and what good was a grown Clydesdale to a group of bandits that each had their own horse? I looked around the forest, realizing that I was still lost.

"Um, how do I get back?" I asked shyly. I expected that they would ignore the question but Flynn pointed towards a nearby dirt path,

"Just follow that path. It'll lead you right back to the castle." With that, the two bandits entered the bush and walked away. I stared at the path back for a few minutes, my mind saying I should go back, my heart telling me I shouldn't. I looked at the two heads that were walking away from me. I kicked Angus and the Clydesdale trotted into their direction. The turned around when they heard the approaching beat of Angus' hooves,

"Can I come with you? I don't want to go back." I said, maybe a little too fast. North and Flynn looked at each other, probably having expected anything but what I just asked. Flynn shrugged his shoulders.

"Follow us." North said before he continued walking. We walked silently, the only sounds coming from Angus and nature. After a moment, a small clearing appeared. In the center settled the remains of a fire and two horses were tied to nearby tree. One of the horses had a beige color with a black mane while the other, the smaller one of the two, was white with a slightly darker white mane. The clearing was quiet and peaceful but something wasn't right about it. It wasn't large enough to house the 20 bandits North led and, even more strange, the other bandits were nowhere in sight.

"Where are the others?" I asked as I got off of Angus.

"What others?" Flynn replied

"The other bandits." I deadpanned to him. My reply caused a chuckle to escape from North,

"There are none."

"What?" North sighed,

"What do they teach in that castle?" He muttered to himself "Those bandits that I supposedly lead are hired thugs."

"Hired thugs?" I asked. North nodded, "How do you get them to listen to you?" Thugs are extremely violent people and getting them to listen to _anyone _was difficult,

"It's easy. Just promise them money and threaten to cut off their cock if they don't listen to you and they'll obey you without question." His completely blunt answer caught me off guard a little and I simply gave a small and nervous smile. North walked to the fire pit and placed some nearby chunks of wood in it and lit it with some flint and steel. I sat down beside him,

"Can I ask you something?"

"Didn't you just do that?" Flynn yelled as he tended to the white horse. North yelled something at him in a language I didn't understand. He sat down beside me,

"Just ignore him. What's your question?"

"Where are you from? I don't recognize your accent." He smiled,

"Guess." He said with a joking hint in his voice. Guess. Seemed easy

enough if you knew many countries

"Ireland?" North shook his head,

"More to the east." He hinted

"France?"

"Further." He's from a place further than France? Travel to France alone was several weeks, anything further would be a few months! I didn't know any lands beyond France. With a sigh, I shook my head,

"I don't know." I said in defeat but to my relief, North gave a comforting smile,

"I come from a land called Rus. It's several months travel from here. Far beyond France, beyond the Holy Roman Empire." As he lay down on the grass, placing his hands behind his head, I stared at him in awe,

"You've seen so much of this world."

"My dear lady, I've seen more of this world than you would've in 10 lifetimes." As much as I wanted to deny this, I knew that it was true. I spent all of my life in DunBroch. The furthest I had ever been from there was London.

"Why did you decide to come here?"

"My life has hardly been stable. I was abandoned at a very young age on the slope of a mountain. I taught myself how to survive. I was probably somewhere in my teens when the most savage tribe of all Rus found me: the Cossacks. I stayed with them for several years but I left as I couldn't abide with their bloodthirsty demeanor." He sat up slightly, his arm keeping him from falling. He continued his story with his hand motioning along, "I wandered around, slowly moving my way west. I stowed away on a ship bound from the low lands to England and worked my way north. Next thing I knew, I found him." He pointed towards Flynn, who jumped back when the white horse pounced, "A little 11-year-old orphan, lost in the forest and scared of his own shadow."

"So you weren't always a bandit?" I asked as he lay back down in the soft grass,

"More of a vagabond but I hardly stole. I was too experienced in living of the land to bother stealing."

"Then why did you start stealing?"

"You really like asking questions, don't you?" I shrugged "I started stealing because I found a greater purpose here." He chuckled, "Well, it found me in the shape of Aileen Fletcher."

"You work for Aileen Fletcher?"

"Yes. How else do you think she has enough money to pay for her operation? Flynn and I steal money, from one of the richest men from these parts, and give it to her."

"But that's high treason! Why do you help her?"

"Aileen helps the Vikings escape and reunites them with their loved ones. I help because I don't want them to lose their loved ones. I know what it feels like to lose a loved one."

"Who did you lose?" He shook his head,

"Doesn't matter. You wouldn't understand anyway. You've never been in love."

"No." I quietly retorted, "I've been in love." It was the first time I had ever admitted that out loud, to anyone. I had been in love and he was not what I had expected. North looked at me,

"You really want to know? It was my wife and my daughter." He sighed deeply and looked at the ground, "My wife was a Rajput from Northern India. I fell madly in love with her and she with me. When we finally had the blessing of her family, we got married and I took her with me to see the world. I took her from the most northern peak of Rus to the most western port of Cathay to the mightiest castles of Europe. When she discovered she was pregnant, we decided to settle in a village. I'd still ride out sometimes but I never went far." A smile played on his face as his hand went to his throat, playing with something around it. "The other villagers were uncomfortable with us; none of them had ever seen a woman with brown skin." He continued, "They also didn't like it that I treated her as an equal. When our daughter was born, they grew even more uncomfortable, all because of her skin color. It was lighter than her mother's but darker than mine." His smile disappeared and the light happy tone his voice displayed disappeared, "Their paranoia grew and grew up to the point that they thought my wife and daughter were children of Satan!" He closed his eyes and I could see a rim of water by his eyelashes, "One night, I came back late from a ride and the house was empty. I ran to the village center where the villagers captured me. They held me back and forced me to watch as they killed my wife and daughter. They slaughtered them." I could suddenly see what he had been fiddling with around his throat: a necklace. From where I sat, it looked like it was made of a dark green string with a circular white stone that had a striking resemblance to a full moon, "You said you were in love?" His baritone voice caused my gaze to return to his reddened eyes, "Try to imagine watching your love die before your eyes! Imagine yourself standing there helplessly! Unable to reach him, unable to help him!" He looked at me, "When you can imagine that and feel the pain, you'll understand!" He sighed loudly, stood up and disappeared into the bushes. I watched the spot where he disappeared until Flynn spoke,

"Don't take it personally." I looked at him but he was staring in the same direction as I had only moments before, "He's been through so much." He looked down at me, "Come on. I'll lead you back to the castle." I went to Angus. The trip was in complete silence. Flynn brought me back to the same spot as he and North had found and turned without another word,

"Thank you." I called out to him. He stopped his trek and faced me with a charming smirk,

"Don't mention it." I returned the smile and kicked Angus lightly but

Flynn stopped me, "Also," He said, "if you ever need allies, North and I will be here to help."

****Ohhhhhh, Merida said she was in love. The question is: with who?****

****The wife concept for North I took from another fanfiction of mine, though the daughter I just created to make North's past even more sad. My guess for North's age would be late 30's, early to mid 40's. Now, I know some of you will probably be unhappy with what North said about getting the thugs to listen to him but think about it for a sec. He was abandoned in the wild, grew up under the wing of a savage tribe and pretty much wandered around for most of his adult life away from society so he would probably be a lot more honest and much more blunt than most men and he wouldn't really know what is appropriate to say around high standing people like Merida.****

****Anyway... Review, favourite, follow.****

22. Aileen and Artair find out

****Blech, it's snowing here and I don't like it! Don't really have a lot to say about this chapter except that there's an insight to Artair's past and more clues as to who Aileen Fletcher really is but I have a sneaking suspicion you guys already know who she is. ****

****Warnings: Violence, language, blood, and a lot of angst.****

****Chapter #20: Aileen and Artair find out****

Third Person POV

Aileen Fletcher liked taking walks through the forest. Whenever the operation became too stressful or Seoc was annoying her, she would always seek solace in the quietest parts of the woods.

Her walk today was sparked by an argument between Seoc, SeÃ²saidh, and Fionntan. Heather had come by earlier to give them their supply of food when SeÃ²saidh insulted her for being a bastard. Fionntan had punched SeÃ²saidh hard in his face and had broken to old man's nose in the process too.

Aileen sighed. She knew that Fionntan had feelings for Heather but the man was too shy to even talk to her. It surprised Aileen that Fionntan stood up for Heather. It was the first time he ever displayed feelings towards her, not that she saw it.

Aileen walked close by a cove that she visited often on her walks. It was always quiet but now a voice came from it,

"I'm not going in!" A male yelled. It was replied with an otherworldly croon and the snapping of a few branches, "Toothless, you're being ridiculous! I don't smell that bad!" Another croon and the splash of water, "HA! You missed!"

Aileen entered the cove and gaped at what she saw. Hendry Gallach standing face to face with a dragon! She hid behind a rock and her

hand wrapped around the handle of her axe. With a terrifying war cry, she sprang from hiding and charged at the dragon,

"Run!" She screamed at Hendry. The dragon had spotted her and, with teeth bared, charged towards her with a loud snarl. Aileen stopped and stood her ground, lifting her axe to deliver a killing blow to the dragon's head.

The dragon leapt into the air just as Hendry pushed Aileen to the ground and threw her axe out of her reach.

The sight she was greeted with scared and fascinated her. Hendry stood in front of the angered dragon, arms high and wide, keeping the beast from attacking. He was shouting at it to calm down and it did when Hendry said,

"She's a friend." The dragon got off of his hind legs but still growled at Aileen and even tried to advance towards, only to be stopped by Hendry, "You scared him"

"I scared HIM!?" Aileen screeched. The dragon growled, causing her to cringe slightly in fear, "Who is him?" Hendry was silent, fear obvious in his face. He stood straight and pointed to the dragon,

"Aileen, Toothless." He said, his voice wavering slightly, "Toothless, Aileen." The dragon snarled.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Artair always hated it when William wasn't around. He always felt unwanted and neglected without him. The feeling of being unwanted and neglected was one Artair was familiar with.

Growing up, Artair had to fend for himself. Nobody wanted him, nobody cared for him. In the slums nearby MacInroy Castle, everybody knew that Artair's mother was a prostitute and that his father had dumped him in the slums after she died. He was scolded, abused, neglected for a crime he didn't do. The ones that mistreated him the most were the Anglo-Saxons, who felt that they were suffering more than the child they were abusing.

Nobody ever expected Artair to climb ranks but one brave step changed his future.

It was one year after the death of Lady CaitrÃ-ona and Boyd. Artair was 14, the same age as William. Lord Robert and his three children were returning home with splendid regalia after a visit to the rich Gilmore family. The town folk had gathered around the main road to welcome their lord back. Artair joined too and had to push his way through the thick crowd to get a glimpse of the nobility.

He watched as Graham got off his horse and knelt by some children that had been housed in a local orphanage. He smiled at them and asked if they were being treated right. The town folk had always liked Graham. He was kind, compassionate, benevolent, and as great a leader as his father was. Why anyone wanted to try to assassinate this man was a mystery.

The mystery was quickly solved.

Artair was the only one that saw a Viking in the crowd aiming a loaded bow at the heir. He was the only one that realized what the Viking wanted to do. In a moment of blind devotion, Artair ran in front of Graham and took the arrow to the chest. As his world went black, Artair knew that nobody would miss him and nobody would even care.

He woke up in a strange place. He knew he wasn't in the slums; there was no building there that had a stone ceiling. He looked to the side when he felt someone dabbing a cold cloth to his burning forehead. The woman explained that he was in the servant's quarters of MacInroy Castle. He had been there, unconscious, for about a week. She told him that he was lucky. The wound caused by the arrow was deep but only a flesh wound.

Artair spent the next two days recovering some of his strength. The woman had told him that Lord Robert wanted to speak to him after he was strong enough to do so. When Artair finally was strong enough and went to the audience with his Lord, he never expecting Lord Robert to invite him to work and live in the castle. Artair had accepted without a second thought.

Being a stable boy was hard work but Artair found it better than been insulted and beaten. He was happy. He had food, warm clothing and bed, and people around him that cared about him, that is until they found out about his past.

Artair had seen William a few times during his work but the young man gave the stable boy hardly a second glance. The first real conversation the two had was in secret in the middle of the forest. How friendship ever blossomed remains a mystery to Artair to this day but he was absolutely certain that, by the passing of the first year, nothing short of death could separate him and his friend.

Artair was walking through the forests of DunBroch. Nothing was happening and he was bored. He kicked at branches and stray stones as he marched deeper and deeper in the woods. The peaceful silence was interrupted laughter up ahead. When Artair listened carefully, he heard it was a man and a woman laughing.

Curious, Artair walked to the sound and nearly fell into a steep cove in the process. There, at the bottom, he saw three figures. A man, a great black beast and a figure in a blue cloak. The man walked around and Artair saw the glint of a prosthetic and the beast he recognized from a picture he had once seen. The picture was one of a dragon.

Why he was running back in the direction of the castle, he didn't know but he did know that he had to get back quickly to sent a letter to William. William would be pleased to know that Hendry Gallach was committing high treason with his knowledge on Aileen Fletcher. The dragon, however, would catch William's attention. Dragons' are Viking myth, ferocious beasts that killed on sight, so why did the dragon in the cove look so calm and tame?

The marketplace was once again busy, though not with the foreign merchants. The crown was made up of people going about their daily

business. He saw a few maids from the castle buying supplies for the kitchen but the only maid there that caught his eye was the beautiful Rapunzel.

She was crouching in front of a boy and handing him a loaf of bread, the way he moved his hands and was staring at nothing suggesting to Artair that the boy was blind. Watching her gave him a warm feeling of lust inside. Yes, Rapunzel was married but that had never stopped him.

He could have any woman he wanted. He wasn't bad looking. Some would even challenge that he was more handsome than William. He was the right hand man of one of the most powerful men in DunBroch and he had a reputation of being a very good lover.

But Rapunzel... She was special. Of all the women he had ever had or wanted, she was the only one to have said no to him, something that only made him even more attracted to her.

He followed her when she left the boy and continued with whatever it was she was doing. When she was close enough, he grabbed her arm and forced to turn to face him. He wanted to speak but she spoke first, harshly.

"I've told you before, Artair, and I will say it only one more time. NO!" And she spat in his face. She tried to free herself from his grip but he held on tight. He slapped her hard across the face. She fell to the ground. The people around the two watched in horror as Artair lifted Rapunzel by her hair and continued his cruelty.

* * *

><p>Jack's POV

I had been having an unnerving feeling in my stomach the whole morning. It was distracting me from my work and Aster, who worked with me, even offered to send me home but I had utterly refused.

I was putting away a saddle when, in the distance, I saw somebody running towards the stable. As they got closer, I saw that it was MÃ;iri. When she noticed I was looking at her, she began to wave her arms frantically. She obviously needed me for something, so I walked to her. She stopped just in front of me, panting heavily,

"Jack." She panted, "You have to come quickly!" I'd be lying if I said I wasn't confused,

"Why? What's happened?"

"Artair attacked Rapunzel." After she spoke, I immediately ran for the town, MÃ;iri following me closely. That bastard had attacked her again! Why couldn't he just let her be? What has she ever done to him? When we had reached the edge of town, Rapunzel, along with another woman, met me there. Rapunzel nose's was bleeding and one of her sleeves was ripped open. Below the rip was a large gash. She also had a cut above her eyebrow and her cheek was glowing red.

I cupped her face and assessed her injuries. Angry boiled in me. Before any of the women could stop me, I ran into town, seeking an explanation and revenge.

I looked around for Artair but I couldn't find him. I finally spotted him by a stall, flirting with a young woman standing behind it. I paced fast towards him and roughly turned him by his shoulder. Before he could react, I delivered a hard blow across his face. He grunted loudly and fell to the ground, catching everyone's attention. As they began to form a rough circle around me and Artair, he got up and faced me. I was surprised to see him smiling and I grabbed him by his black shirt,

"What do you want with my wife?!" I yelled at him. He smirked,

"That cunt? I want to stab her," He let out a low chuckle when he saw my face full of shock, "But not with a knife." He let out a laugh but that quickly stopped as I brought my knee to his abdomen. He crutched over and grunted loudly, trying to retrieve the air that he'd lost. I then took him roughly by his shoulder and straightened him and I drew my other arm back, ready for another punch,

"Jack! Stop!" I looked over my shoulder, my arm still drawn, and saw Rapunzel standing on the edge of the crowd, looking at me and shaking her head slightly. As I looked at her, I began to drop my arm slowly and my clenched hand relaxed. I was about to let go of the hand that held the shirt when I felt a push against my shoulder. I let go and stumbled back, a gasp escaping from nearly every woman present. I looked at my left shoulder. It was then that I saw the knife lodged into it and a blob of crimson around the knife expanding into my vest. I looked at Artair, who was smiling but I saw the shock in his eyes. He met my gaze and seconds later he ran into the crowd behind him and disappeared.

I heard someone call my name but I couldn't hear who; time had slowed as my gaze went back to the knife. Slowly, I wrapped my fingers around the blade and pulled. The pain was excruciating. The blade was covered in red and it was spilling onto my hand. As soon as the blade was out, the blood began to seep faster into my vest. I felt hands grabbing onto my shoulder, my arms, and my back. I could hear echoes of voices and spots of black appeared in my vision. I tried to take a step back but my feet gave out and then, my vision was clouded in black.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Hamish ran as fast as he could towards his and his brother's room. News spread quickly about what Artair had done to Jack and Rapunzel and Hamish wasn't about to let him get away with it.

He burst through the door to find his two brothers wrestling with each other,

"Artair attacked Jack!" He cried. Hubert and Harris stopped instantly,

"What?!" Hubert yelled,

"Where is Artair?! I'm going to kill him!" Harris threatened.

"Artair has fled to the north." Hubert explained, "The coward." he muttered.

"What happened?" Hubert asked,

"Artair beat up Rapunzel. Then Jack attacked Artair and Artair stabbed him in his shoulder.

"We have to let Merida know!" Hubert said and the other two nodded,

"Artair will not get away with this." The three teenagers quickly scrambled to their desk and wrote a letter to their sister with the hope that justice will be served.

****The triplets say that Artair won't get away with this. The question is: will he? And Artair knows about Toothless and Hiccup's involvement with Aileen Fletcher That could be really bad for Hiccup in the future.****

****Go ahead, murder me for what I did to Jack. ****

****Review, favorite, and follow.****

23. The Whisperers

****Guys, I've made my decision. This is going to become a novel. Currently, the title is still **Until the End **but if it changes, I'll let you guys know. Author name, I'll let you guys now in due time (I'm not comfortable revealing something so personal online). I'll post the first chapter on DA and maybe the chapter after it but nothing else. When it'll show up, I can't say but when it does, feel free to critique.****

****OK, so, apparently, there was a bit of confusion with one of my guest reviewers as to how Artair had seen Hiccup, Toothless, and Aileen. Hopefully this chapter will clear that confusion but if not, let me know in a review and I will explain in the AN of the next chapter.****

****Also, someone asked in a PM about a link to the dances from the gathering several chapters back. This link is the one that Merida dances with Hiccup: [www DOT YouTube DOT com/watch?v=p_WufkmPUPI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_WufkmPUPI) A word of warning: a lot of newbie's are dancing in this vid, so it'll probably not look as good. And here is the other dance: [www DOT YouTube DOT com/watch?v=WUnXxuaXAVU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUnXxuaXAVU) Another word of warning: both dances can be a bit painful to watch, but trust me, they are so much fun to do.****

****Nothing to report in this chapter, just a little foreshadowing. Enjoy!****

****Chapter #21: The Whisperers****

Third Person POV

Artair rode swiftly to the north. It was near sunset when he arrived at the stables of MacInroy Castle. He jumped off his horse and left it in the care of the stable boy before entering the castle and

roaming the halls to find the private chambers of William, a place where he was quite often.

Artair knocked and entered when William mumbled from the inside. As Artair had expected, William was sitting by the fireplace with a book in his hands, seemingly lost in it. He didn't look up until Artair closed the door,

"Artair!" He exclaimed. He put his book on his desk and came to the other male. The two men embraced each other, "It's good to see you." William said after they separated, "What brings you here?" William walked to a table, "And don't leave out any detail." He joked as he retrieved a pitcher filled with wine and filling two goblets. He gave one to Artair.

"I discovered something about Hendry Gallach." He took a sip of the red liquid. William took a sip too,

"What about him is so important that you rode all the way here to inform me? Couldn't you have sent a messenger?" He took another sip and walked back to his chair behind the desk and sat down,

"I didn't trust a messenger with what I saw."

"What did you see?" William asked, making a sweeping motion with his hand that held the goblet. Artair stared into the liquid again before looking at his friend- lord.

"It seems that the cripple has acquainted himself with a dragon." William stared at Artair for a moment before letting out a chuckle

"Have you gone mad, Artair? A dragon? Viking folklore." He chuckled a little louder. Artair seemed un-amused. He placed his goblet down before slamming his fists hard on William's desk,

"Don't deny that you don't know the existence of dragons, William!" He paused, "I know you've seen them! You were even the one to start the rumor in DunBroch that they didn't exist!" Artair knew that to be the truth. He had seen William once with some Vikings. They had been showing him a dragon they had captured. Granted, it was only the size of a cat but a dragon nonetheless. After the Vikings had been slaughtered, William had purposely started that rumor to make the Scots believe that the Vikings were mad and should be disposed of.

William sighed and put his goblet down

"I really can't hide anything from you, can I?"

"Even your deepest secrets." Artair said with a smirk, standing back up straight,

"_If only_." William thought, "What else can you tell me about this dragon?" He leaned back in his chair and propped his feet up on an empty part of the desk.

"Hendry has tamed it. It would listen to his every word, obey his every command. It was almost as if the dragon understood and talked to him."

"How do you know all this?"

"I was walking through the woods when I suddenly found a cove. At the very bottom they were. I only needed to see the glimpse of a prosthetic to know that it was Hendry Gallach; in all my life, I have never seen a fake leg like that. I went to the castle, got a horse, and rode back to the cove. I spied for a little while longer before coming here." The men made eye contact, "But that's not all." He refilled his goblet and took a long chug, "He knows Aileen Fletcher." William nearly fell off his chair. He stood up and slowly approached Artair,

"Are you certain?" He inquired,

"There was a figure in a blue cloak with Hendry and the dragon in the cove and moments earlier I had heard a woman laughing. It couldn't have been anyone else but Aileen Fletcher." William walked to the fireplace, his arm leaning on the mantle, still having a difficult time absorbing the information,

"Should we inform His Majesty?" Artair asked. William shook his head.

"No." Artair looked at William confused. Hendry Gallach was committing high treason by consorting with a person as Aileen and William wanted to keep it silent? William rolled his eyes at Artair's confusion

"We can use this to our advantage." He explained with enthusiasm, "Can you imagine how much more powerful my family will be with a dragon by my side?"

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

The cove was, as always, lovely. Toothless and I had just gone for another ride and now we were relaxing in the cove. I was sitting in the grass staring at the sky, while Toothless was occasionally splashing his tail in the water. I had removed his prosthetic tail just after we landed; trying to fly with a leather tail that was wet was not a good idea. I closed my eyes but sleep evaded me as a ghastly sound called Toothless singing was heard

"_The rock and pool is nice and cool_" I let out a groan and sat up as he splashed his tail and snapped at a fish in the water, "_Our only wish is to catch a fish-_"

"Not even flying?"

"_You have fulfilled that wish._" I smiled at him and he gave his toothless smile in return. Mine disappeared when a question returned to my mind, one that has been with since I touched his muzzle for the first time,

"Toothless, why can I understand you?" He lifted his head and his ear plates stood up. He looked at me with his large eyes,

"_Me don't know. The last Whisperer died twaponder years

ago._"

"Whisperers?" I asked, "That's what you call people like me?" Toothless nodded his large head, "How did the Whisperers die out?"

"_The last one had no children that could speak to greenbloods. He was killed in a battle against the Queen_." His eyes became silent and he put his head on his forepaws with equivalent sadness.

"The Queen?"

"_On the island you called Dragon Island, lives a dragon that is greater than a mountain and more hunger for blood and power than the most greedy men on this Earth._ _She captures dragons with the lure of paradise and takes control of their minds. The more dragons she captures, the stronger her control becomes and wider her influence spreads. She forces them to gather food for her and if you didn't bring enough, she'd eat you._" In my mind, he sighed, "_Me lived there for many years but me managed to escape, though not unnoticed._"

Not unnoticed? I suddenly thought back to when I first saw Toothless, the night of the gathering. The storm, the Skrill...

"So that Skrill you were fighting..." I started and he nodded,

"_It was trying to push me back into her control._"

"How did you even manage to escape her control?" He tore his gaze away from me and stared at the little waterfall at the other end of the lake,

"_Me was bonded with a man before._ _Greenbloods that have been bonded with man are more resistant to her influence._"

"What happened to your previous rider?"

"_He died and me couldn't save him._" He crooned with depression and, if he was human, he probably would be crying right now, "_The Queen knocked him away from me and took control of me before me could save him._"

"You were bonded with the last rider, weren't you?"

"_Yessee_." He closed his eyes. I went to him and petted his muzzle. He leaned into my hand, "_In me last moment of freedom, me swore to myself that me would never fail my rider again._" He placed his head on my lap, "_And now, after un twaponder years, me can keep my swear._"

"Twaponder?"

"_300._"

"Toothless," I laid down on his head, hugging him even closer, "If you die trying to save me, I would die anyway."

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

William made his way towards the library. The dragon Artair had spoken of fascinated him. It had been years since William had seen a dragon, even though the one he had seen was barely the size of a cat. Questions had pondered William's mind after his talk with Artair. Why would a Scottish man train a dragon, a creature from Viking folklore? How was he able to do it?

William opened the large oak door and stepped into the dimly lit room. It was close to midnight so no one, except the caretaker of the countless books, was in the library. The old caretaker looked up from the old book he was studying and scribbling occasional notes into when he heard the door open. He hastily stood up and gave a bow,

"My Lord William. What brings you here?" His old and shaky voice croaked,

"I need a book." William replied as he ran his fingers over the spines of dust covered book, reading the worn gold letters. The old man slowly approached William, slightly holding up the fabric of his brown robe. He stopped beside William; if his back wasn't hunched, the old man would've been just as tall as William.

"And what book does my Lord require?" William stared down at the old man,

"I need a book about Viking legends or, more specifically, about dragons"

"Why would my Lord-?"

"Don't question me, Roderick. If I say I need a book, I need it. You do not question me why!"

"I meant no offence, my Lord. It just that I'd never imagine that you'd be interested in Viking lore, seeing how serious you take our moral." Roderick paused, "There is a book in this library about Viking legends. I'll go get it for you." The old man walked between two large shelves and quickly disappeared.

William looked around the room, suddenly realizing that he hardly ever came here anymore; he always got someone else to bring books to him. As a child, he would always sneak in here in-between lessons and read. When the teachers found him in here, they would scold him and complain to his father about it but Lord Robert always ignored them, stating that reading was the best way for his second son to learn.

William brushed his fingers along the many books, trying to remember if he ever read them. He stopped when he saw one book. It had no title on the spine, the leather was hard, old, and worn. He pulled it out. It seemed small in his hands and the cover had no letter engraved in it and it was completely covered in dust but he recognized the book. He hadn't seen it since the banishment of the Anglo-Saxons.

It was his favorite book.

It _used _to be. A friend had given it to him as a birthday present.

William remembered that he had rejected it because he knew that that book was his friend's most prized possession.

William sighed and put it back as he remembered that the last time he had seen that friend was 15 years ago and that he probably was dead.

William walked to the book the Roderick had been studying. When William looked closer, he saw that it was his family tree, going back more than 12 generations. At the very bottom of the tree was SeÃ²ras. A line went from him to Christine and her dead husband. Lines from her husband then led to his family tree of Gilmore while the lines from Christine led to William, Graham, and Boyd. The four of them were then connect to their parents, Lord Robert and Lady CaitrÃ³na.

Each of their names had a date of birth and some had a date of death. William fought down a twinge of sadness when he saw the day of birth and day of death for Boyd. William remembered the day Boyd was born. William was 13, Christine 11, and Graham was 17. He remembered that Christine was disappointed that she had another brother; she'd been hoping for a sister but she couldn't help but love Boyd at first sight, remarking that he looked like marble. The thought brought a smile to William's face.

The shuffling sound behind the bookcases meant that Roderick had returned. William looked up as the old man appeared with a fairly small but thick book.

"Here you are, my Lord." He croaked, holding the book to William. The young lord took it and brushed his hand on the cover.

Knowing that he shouldn't expect a reply, Roderick went back to the book but he hadn't even picked up the quill when William spoke,

"Roderick, how long have you worked here?" If he had been expecting anything, it hadn't been that. Sitting back down to relief that small ache in his back, Roderick answered the question,

"A very long time, my Lord. Since your father was a little boy."

"And you've always worked in the library?"

"No. I grew up in a monastery. One day, your grandfather hired me to educate his only son, your father." The old caretaker smiled, "I taught your father almost everything he knew. After several years, I wasn't just his mentor. I was his best friend." When Roderick looked at William, the young lord was staring at the floor, his face display the rare emotion of sadness,

"You've known my father longer than I have. And you knew him better too."

"William," the said man looked up, "I understand that you must've felt left out as the second son but you must understand that your father loved you just as much as he loved Graham, Boyd, and Christine."

"Father never loved Christine!" William snapped, "You know that!" He turned on his heel, walked briskly out the door and slammed it loudly shut.

Roderick stood quietly in his spot, knowing that there was an ounce of truth in William's words. If Robert had any love or compassion for his daughter, the old man had never seen it. Roderick sometimes wondered if Christine ever realized that she's lucky that she wasn't the first born? That her first born child wasn't a daughter?

The prior at Roderick's monastery had once said: _In a clan that worships men as if they were God Himself, what good were women?_ Roderick shook his head and returned to the book once more, disagreeing with William silently as he had many, many times.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Though he would never admit it out loud, William thought that the book was a very interesting read. It did take a while for him to regain his old skill of reading runes but once he did, he couldn't help but be fascinated. He mostly ignored all the myths and legends about the Viking gods but stopped as soon as he reached the section he was looking for: dragons. The book spoke a lot about a man named Bork the Bold, the writer of the infamous Book of Dragons. As he turned the pages, he read about the demon dragon, the Red Death, a dragon as large as a mountain and more bloodthirsty than the Outcasts. He kept turning and read about great battles and the many types of dragons. Deadly Nadders, Timberjacks, Monstrous Nightmares, Polar Serpents, and countless other dragons had a page dedicated to them. The exception was the Night Fury; it contained nothing more than a title and a single sentence at the bottom, the words condemning the rare breed as nothing more than a bringer of death and destruction.

After searching for nearly hour, William still hadn't found what he was looking for. He turned another page with a single paragraph titled "Dragon Whisperers" and two pictures. One of a man riding a Whispering Death and the other of a woman with her hand on the snout of a Deadly Nadder. Curious, William read the paragraph.

These mythical people possessed the rare gift of telepathic communication with dragons. Because of this gift, they were the only ones that were capable of taming and training the rare creatures. How the gift is granted is unknown but many believe that the Gods choose ones that are Viking in blood and heart

William's breath stopped as he read the last sentence. Slumping back into his chair, he processed the information he just read. The Gods chose the ones to inherit the gift. They chose someone that is Viking in blood and heart.

"_If that were true,_" William thought, "_Is it possible that Hendry Gallach, the _Scottish_ blacksmith, is really a Viking?_"

***Play Beethoven's 5th symphony* William knows Hiccup's deepest secret. I was actually listening to the 5th symphony when I was writing chapter, not that it helped a lot. Some sections in this chapter I had saved in my files for weeks, months even.**

****For any of you that have seen Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, you will recognize the song Toothless was singing.****

****Anyway, I'm looking forward to next chapter. Review, favourite, follow****

24. Revealed

****I HATE WINTER! There was a big, major blizzard a little while ago and that usually leads to shoveling the driveway EVERY hour and pushing cars that got stuck in the snow. My back is killing me!****

****Ok I'm good now. Really off topic but some of you probably know that I'm a swimmer and I'm happy to announce that I am 1 of about 6 other ladies in my school that qualified for finals! Wish me luck!****

****I went to see ****_**Frozen ****_****a yesterday and I absolutely loved it. I went with a few friends and we were probably the loudest people in a sold out show. I ship the idea that Elsa and Anna are the daughters of Jack and Rapunzel but they won't make an appearance in the story for a few reasons, mainly plot reasons. I'm hoping to add them into future fanfictions******

****There are a few things to report in this chapter. Mentions of rape, abuse, some language and a character death. Character death, huh? Maybe that character's name starts with a J and ends with -ack? I don't know. Read and find out.****

****Chapter #22: Revealed****

Merida's POV

The silence of the kemenade was only broken by the occasional sound of the two small children playing by the corner.

The morning was still young but the castle was already bustling with activity. Today was my last day in this castle. Tomorrow, I would return home. I was excited to go home but I refrained myself to keep the excitement in me.

I stared out the window at the endless green and the miniature figures walking on it, going about their lives; a life I would never understand.

The three knocks at the door turned our attention away from what we were doing. Christine answered to the knock regally.

Tooth came in; she had a letter in her hand

"Your majesty," She said, "This came for you this morning." She held the letter out to me. I walked to her and took it, recognizing the symbol in the wax.

"Thank you, Tooth." And I waved my hand to dismiss her. She curtsied and left the room quietly. I broke the wax and read the letter. It was short but it held urgency and panic even. When I finished the letter, I looked to the children in the corner. They both looked at

me, "Señoras, Katherine. Leave. Please."

"What is it?" Christine asked as she stood up, the book she had been reading still in her hand. The letter crumpled under the force of my angry hands,

"Artair attacked my best friend and stabbed her husband in the shoulder." I looked at Christine, who had dropped her book, "Because my friend wouldn't go to bed with him." The silence in the room was brief. It was broken by the quiet sobs of Anna

"Is there anything they can't do?" She whispered to herself, her hand running nervously through her hair, "William, Artair, the MacInroy men?" Anna's voice was quiet but Christine and I heard every word. Christine spoke first,

"Anna, what do you mean by William? What did William do?" Anna shook her head and walked to the door, "Anna?" The woman kept walking, "ANNA WAIT!" Christine followed her sister-in-law and grabbed her arm. Anna screamed in pain and now the tears began to roll down her pink cheeks. Christine pulled up the sleeve to Anna's dress and gasped loudly when she saw the many bruises, few healing, splattered on her arm, "Anna, what happened? What did this to you?" The two women looked at each other and Christine said, in a much darker tone, "Who did this to you?"

Anna's breathing became quickened and the tears flowed faster. Soon, her legs gave out and Christine lowered the two of them to the ground, Christine holding Anna like a mother would hold an upset child. I joined them on the floor and took Anna's hand,

"Who gave you the bruises, Anna?" I asked quietly. Anna mumbled her answer,

"It was William."

Silence.

Christine let out a breathless gasp and my heart pounded. So, this was the truth beneath the rose. This was the beast behind the beauty.

"You remember a few weeks back that William came here for business?" Anna gasped quietly through sobs. I did remember; that was the week of the gathering, where I had danced with Onceler and Hendry,

"He asked me to come too." Anna continued, "He said that he wanted to negotiate with the Gilmore family again. The first night there, he asked me to come to his private chambers and then he forced himself onto me. I told him no and fought back." She began to cry more, "Then he threatened my Katherine. He said he would kill her if I didn't give him what he wanted." Christine hugged Anna tighter and Anna clung to her even more "But that's not the worst. He asked me to his chambers a few times in the last week and he'd beat me, always threatening that he'd kill my daughter." Anna broke down, no longer able to keep the emotions locked inside her. Christine played with Anna's blonde hair, whispering reassurances to her.

"Anna," Christine determinedly said, "I promise that Katherine will be safe from him. And I promise you that William will not get away

with this."

* * *

><p>Still Merida's POV

Christine had confronted William. Though the door was locked and further away, Anna and I could hear them scream and yell at each other. Anna flinched every time she heard her name being yelled. I had taken her hand in mine to comfort her but if it was helping, I didn't know. Christine's voice bellowed,

"Was it love, William?! Or just another woman you wanted to stick your cock into?!"

"Hold your tongue!" We heard William scream,

"I won't!" There was a moment of quieter speech before Christine raised her voice again, "You think I haven't noticed you sneaking out in the middle of the night to go to brothels?! You are just as promiscuous as father was but I had never realized that your morals were so low that you'd rape your own family!" Silence. And then...

THUD!

Something fell in the room. A door down the hallway opened and William stormed out. He saw us and walked the opposite direction. When we were certain he was gone, we walked into the room.

Christine lay on the floor beside a fallen table and shards of glass, her hand on her red cheek. She looked at us, her eyes begging for some comfort. We all fell to the ground and embraced each other.

What kind of man would hit his own sister? What kind of man would rape his sister-in-law? Who would threaten to hurt children?

As we held each other, I was only sure of one thing. Any feelings I had for William, any love that I carried for him was gone.

* * *

><p>Still Merida's POV

The party was frivolous, the music lively, the food delicious but all the ones that witnessed the fight between Christine and William were silent, stoic, and unable to enjoy the festivities. I cradled a goblet of wine as I watched the other guests danced and make merry.

The time passed fast but unnoticed.

It must have been around midnight when a messenger from Lord MacIntosh came into the hall. He rushed to Ewan and whispered something in his ear. An expression of shock fell across Ewan's face for only a moment before he dismissed the messenger and excused himself from the head table. Anna followed him closely.

I didn't know how long they were gone for before I left to find them.

I found Ewan and Anna in their room, Ewan sitting in a chair by the fireplace, crying, while Anna knelt beside him, trying to comfort him.

"What happened?" I asked quietly. Ewan looked at me with red eyes,

"My father is dead."

****And it wasn't Jack. Review, favorite, follow.****

25. Truth

****Merry Christmas! Here's my gift to you guys: a new chapter filled with Mericcup moments! Not only that though. This chapter also features how Hiccup escaped Berk and how he lost his leg.****

****Have you guys seen the new trailer for HTTYD 2? OH MY GOD! I do NOT want to wait another 6 months! If you read carefully, you'll see that I added some stuff from the trailer. I also added a song title from **_**Brave**_. If you spot it, well good on you!****

****Can I ask you guys a small favor? If English is not your native tongue, could you sent your language's variation of "Merry Christmas" in review or pm? Why? Because I'm absolutely fascinated by other languages. And, considering English isn't my native tongue, I may as well say "Vrolijk Kerstfeest." (That is Dutch, by the way)****

****The second POV that shows up in the chapter will make you guys very, very happy. An extra Christmas present, if you will.****

****Warnings: I guess you could say some scary images, if you're a person who visualizes everything like me.****

****Chapter 23: Truth****

Merida's POV

The journey back was as agonizing as the party last night. If William attempted to talk to me, attempted to form an excuse, I'd look away. When he tried to ride closer to me, I'd widen the gap between us. I was relieved when he finally gave up on his advances; he wouldn't have succeeded in anyway

I couldn't love William. Not as a friend, not as a fiancÃ©e, not as a husband. How could I when someone else had already captured all the love I possess? The mere thought of him made my heart pound and my stomach feel light and make me feel happy and shy too.

I smiled when his smile came to my mind and my heart clenched when I pictured his handsome face.

"Your Majesty." The calm words broke me out of my reverie. I looked at the man who broke it: General Pitchiner.

"Yes?" I asked him. He smiled at me and pointed his hand to something in the distance. He pointed at home. Not caring what William thought or that I looked nothing like a princess, I coaxed Angus into a full

gallop. We quickly left the entourage behind us.

It was just me, Angus, the wind, and freedom.

* * *

<p>Jack's POV

I groaned when pain suddenly shot through my shoulder. I had been refreshing the hay in the stables and I had accidentally moved my arm the wrong way. Aster had immediately taken over the job while I sat down, waiting for the pain to go away.

The physicians had told me that the wound wasn't that severe and that I'd live but it certainly didn't feel that way.

When the pain was gone, I went back to work. I was hardly there for a second when the familiar drumming of a large Clydesdale resounded. I turned around and saw Angus and the undoubted red hair of Merida.

"Good evening, my lady." I chuckled but she didn't smile. She jumped off of Angus and flung her arms around me. She let go when I screamed in pain.

"Sorry." She mumbled,

"Don't worry about it." She suddenly punched me on my uninjured shoulder,

"Don't you ever scare me like that again!" She nearly yelled at me,

"So long as Artair leaves Rapunzel alone, I won't!" I retorted, rubbing my punched shoulder. Merida smiled,

"Then you should be happy to know that Artair stayed behind in MacInroy Castle." I didn't believe her. Why would Artair stay behind when nothing could be done to him? The King and Queen were too afraid of what William would do if they spoke up against him.

"Then who is coming in his place? CinÃ;ed?" Merida shook her head,

"No. General Pitchiner is." How was that any better? Merida smiled again when she saw my expression, "Trust me, Jack. Kozmotis has more loyalty, more honor and soul than William could ever hope to have. Besides, his late wife was from England, so why would he hold any prejudices against you?"

"His wife was from England?" She nodded. I looked at her and just shrugged my shoulders.

"Is Hendry still working?" She asked suddenly, rather quietly too.

"He is. He took on an apprentice a few days ago. He should still be in the smithy with the boy." She nodded earnestly and smiled,

"Thank you!" She nearly squealed and ran off towards the castle. I

looked at Aster, who shrugged at the princess' sudden excitement. I shook my head and went back to work.

* * *

><p>Merida's POV

I was all but running towards the smithy. I couldn't contain my excitement. It took all my inner will not to burst through the smithy door. I took a deep breath and slowly opened it.

And there he was.

Hendry was hammering a sheet of glowing iron. The iron was stuck tightly in-between tongs held by a young boy with gold hair. Whenever Hendry told him, the boy would turn the metal. As the glow started to disappear, Hendry took over the tongs and brought it back to the fire, the boy pulling on a line that blew air into the fire.

The boy noticed me first and tapped Hendry lightly on his shoulder. He meet my eyes and we just look. He left the metal in the fire and slowly walked to me. My breathing became unintentionally heavy and my heart began to pound again.

He still felt too far from me when he bowed and muttered something. He stood back up; that's when I noticed the stubble that was growing on his chin.

"Sandy," He called to the boy, "Why don't you go home? It's nearly sunset." The boy nodded and quietly ran out the room, bowing his head towards me as he ran by.

"Your apprentice?" I inquired after the boy had closed the door. Hendry nodded.

"How was MacInroy Castle?" He muttered. I sighed and sat down on a table,

"A nightmare. How was your time here?" Hendry crossed his arms and leaned against the anvil, right across from me,

"Eventful but lonely." Lonely? Had he missed me too?

"Lonely?" He sighed but smiled,

"Well, not very lonely. I made a really good friend."

"Who?" He stood up,

"I'll introduce you to him." He walked to the door and opened it, "Meet me by the edge of the forest." And he was gone.

* * *

><p>Still Merida's POV

"Where are we going?" I whined as Hendry continued to drag me through the forest. He looked over his shoulder and smiled,

"You'll see." He kept pulling me and kept refusing to answer my

questions. He walked through very familiar sections of the forest but eventually we went to areas I had ever to let alone even knew existed.

After a while, we entered a cove and I gasped at the sheer beauty of it. I hardly noticed that Hendry let go of my hand as I looked around. I couldn't see a lot. I spotted a large, seemingly black rock and tried to climb onto it but when I touched it, it moved!

I fell to the ground as it turned around to face me menacingly, spreading its large wings and baring its teeth.

I screamed,

"DRAGON!" The dragon crept closer and closer. I tried to get up but my legs collapsed each time.

"Toothless! STOP!" The growling of the dragon stopped. When I looked at him, he was completely docile and Hendry was petting its nose! I stood up, my shaking legs barely able to carry me.

That when I noticed that Hendry had put on some kind of leather armor. He looked at me, apologetically. He took a step towards me but I took a step back,

"I-I'm so sorry." He stuttered, all the while keeping the beast from approaching me, "He usually isn't like that."

"He?" I barely managed to say. He straightened his back and stepped aside so I could see the dragon

"Merida, I want you to meet Toothless." The dragon gave me a dirty look and growled at me. He made a hand signal to it and the dragon sat down on its hind legs. Hendry came to me and whispered, "Do you trust me?" I look straight into his green eyes, the sight calming me. I nodded. He took my hand and pulled me slowly to the dragon.

I heard him whisper something to the dragon and it came slowly towards me. A wave of fear caused me to squeeze Hendry's hand,

"It's alright." He cooed. When the dragon was close enough, Hendry wrapped his free arm around its neck to keep it in place and brought my hand closer to its snout. The dragon closed its eyes as my hand touched the hard scales.

The dragon opened its large eyes and stared at me, calm. He growled and crooned.

"He says you're pretty." I pulled my hand from Toothless' snout.

"You understand him?" Hendry smiled and gave Toothless a pat on his neck,

"Every single word." The dragon crooned again, "Toothless, no!" Hendry yelled at him. Toothless rolled his eyes and crooned again, "Well, try this one." and Hendry wrapped himself around Toothless throat, trying to push him. Toothless stood up and carried Hendry easily over to the pond, "Yeah," I heard Hendry challenge, "You wouldn't hurt a one-legged-," He looked over his shoulder and

screamed when he saw the water Toothless was threatening to throw him into.

Toothless rolled onto his back and pushed Hendry to the ground. He began to mock punch Toothless, "Dragons, enemies again!" The dragon simply let his head fall onto Hendry's stomach, causing the man to groan loudly. Then Toothless began to lick him. Somehow, Hendry managed to get out from under the dragon and look at his dragon saliva covered form. I burst out laughing.

Hendry looked at me to his drenched self then back at me before he started laughing too. Toothless seemed to smile with us and even laugh!

The dragon nudged the back of Hendry. He turned around and patted the dragon's muzzle. I watched the two, the love and bond they shared reminding me of Angus,

"What do you think of him?" Hendry suddenly asked. I walked to the dragon and stroked his neck,

"He's amazing." I said in awe. I slowly moved my hand to Toothless' muzzle, still amazed at the dragon. When I reached his muzzle, my hand touched something else. Not the dragon's muzzle but Hendry's hand. I pulled my hand away, shyly and awkwardly. My cheeks flared as Hendry looked shyly at the ground.

"Would you- Would you like to go for a ride?" The question took me aback for a moment. Ride on a dragon? Do something that I never believed to be possible?

A smile crept upon my face as I nodded. Hendry smiled and nodded briefly as he gracefully placed himself on the saddle. He looked down at me and held out his hand. I took it, trying to ignore the burning in my cheeks, and sat behind him, wrapping my arms around him.

"Let's go, Toothless. But be gentle." Hendry warned. The dragon crooned and before I could blink my eyes, had spread his wings and gone into the sky. I shut my eyes tight and held on to Hendry like my life depended on it. The whistling of wind I could hear in my ears for a minute before it disappeared. I felt Hendry's warm hand touching mine,

"Open your eyes." I did. I've often told myself that riding on Angus was freedom itself but flying on Toothless in the clouds was twice that sensation. Never in my life could I have imagined that I would see the world from so high. Never could I imagine I would be able to touch the sky. I reached up to touch a cloud. I was surprised to only feel air pass through and the light feel of water on them.

I gasped when Toothless suddenly dropped a little bit. My arms automatically clutched themselves around Hendry. He patted my hand before turning Toothless towards the sunset.

"What do you think?" He asked. I could barely talk. What I saw, how I felt could hardly be described in words,

"It's-" I started, "It's incredible." I caught him looking at me and I smiled. He averted my gaze. I didn't miss him sighing and his

shoulders tensing, "Hendry, what's wrong?"

"There's-" He paused, "There's something I want to show you."

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

I turned Toothless to the north, down the same route we accidentally took during our first flight.

I was flying to Berk.

Only an hour had passed when we arrived. During that time, Arevndole's Fire lit the skies but I didn't look; the weight of what I was going to do too heavy to ignore.

Instead of landing on the beach, I landed in the former town center.

"What is this place?" Merida asked as I slid off Toothless. I held a hand out to her,

"This is where I was born." I explained as she took my hand and I helped her down, "In that house." I pointed to the highest hill, where the ruins of my old home could still be seen. She walked away from Toothless and looked around with her mouth open slightly,

"But this," She put her hand on a beam of black wood, "This isn't Scottish land. This is-" She gasped. Her hand dropped and she looked at me, realizing the truth, "You- You're-"

"Yes," Her eyes widened, "I'm a Viking" I went onto my knees and bowed my head to expose my neck, "Throw me in jail and lob off my head." Merida was quiet,

"You're a Viking." She gasped. I lifted my head,

"Yes." She became silent again, looking around at the ruins then back at me,

"I thought Vikings were bigger." I looked at her, having expected her to say anything but that. I shook my head as I stood back up,

"Why'd you think they called me Hiccup?"

"Hiccup?" I nodded "Just like to son of Stoick the Vast." I took a step back and spread my arms, hoping she was prepared for more truths,

"I _am _the son of Stoick the Vast." As they had so many times already that day, her eyes widened,

"You're supposed to be dead." She all but yelled. I chuckled sarcastically,

"Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you," I gave a mocking bow, "Your Majesty." Merida became silent again, looking again at the destruction, the ruins of my old home. She must have heard stories of how the Scots had destroyed his place and now she could actually see

the damage. I joined her when she stopped at the ruins of what once was the smithy.

"How did you escape?" She whispered as she saw the remains of tools and bent swords and broken shafts of axes. I looked away to the ground, the memories flooding back,

"It isn't a pretty story." She placed a hand on my shoulder,

"Tell me. Please."

* * *

><p>Merida's POV

We sat down on the edge of a cliff overlooking the sea and the endless sky filled with stars and a full moon. I listened as Hendry-Hiccup started his tale,

"It happened two years into the war, about 11 years ago. It was nighttime; I was at home, trying to fall asleep but too scared to do so. The ice had recently melted and that meant that the war would start again. After a while, I fell asleep but only a few hours later, I woke up to the sound of an alarm; the Scots were attacking." He looked down at his hands, his eyes having a rim of tears in them, "Though I don't remember clearly, I know I went to the smithy as I was an apprentice back then. Somehow, the smithy caught fire and the blacksmith, Gobber, yelled at me to run and hide. I ran into the havoc of the fighting. I only remember sounds; the sound of metal clashing, men shouting orders, wood burning and," He bit into his fist and the tears were closer to winning the fight, "Gods, the screaming. The screams of children being burnt alive in the houses that were supposed to shield them. The screams of men and women as a sword ran through the armor that was supposed to protect them."

"Somehow in the inferno, I ran into my father. Remember how I said that he never showed any sign that he loved me?" I nodded, "At that moment, he said something that might prove that wrong. It was one word and the last thing he ever said to me. He said- No, he yelled: run!

"I ran and hid and every day after that I regret choosing that hiding spot. I could clearly see the Scots rounding up anybody that was still alive. Among them was my dad." A tear rolled down his cheek, "I watched them forcing him onto his knees and they held him down by his shoulders as another took aim at his neck. I didn't watch it happen but I heard the sword swing and something hitting the ground." He wrapped his arms around himself and looked down again. I placed a hand on his shoulder, hoping to bring him some comfort. He looked at me and smiled, though it disappeared as he continued,

"Next thing I knew, I was running to the docks, desperate to escape the island and the same fate. I did find a boat with a mast but no sail. I tried to find one but when I heard voices and saw light, I took my chances and pushed it out." He wiped the tears away and hugged himself again, staring at the ocean,

"The journey was horrible. I had no food, no water, nothing but a rusty blunt axe but that wasn't the worst that happened." He brought

his legs from over the cliff and put them back on solid land. He placed a hand on his prosthetic, "One day into the journey, I don't know how but the mast broke and it landed on my leg, crushing the bone completely. At that moment, I had a choice: I could die a slow death by starvation or dehydration or meet a quicker end by bleeding to death; I was desperate and saw no hope so I took the axe and cut off my leg." I felt the nausea hit me,

"You cut off your own leg?" I uttered slowly. He nodded,

"Yes." My hand went to my mouth, trying to suppress the feeling coming up my throat. When it was gone, I asked,

"How did you survive?" He stood up. He held out his hands and I took them, my heart pounding again when we touched. When I was fully straight, I noticed how close our faces were. Hiccup must've noticed too as he took a step back and let go of my hands.

"I barely did. The boat began to spring leaks shortly afterwards. The salt water infected my wound badly. The pain was unbearable and I prayed until my inner thoughts were dry and scratchy. Just before I blacked out, I remember I heard footsteps and men shouting. I woke up in the house of the family that took me in and ever since I've been Hendry Gallach." He sighed and walked away from me.

"We're you going to run away?" I called out. He stopped and turned around,

"To where?"

"To England?"

"Yes. Aileen Fletcher found me and offered to send me there. I wanted to live, not just survive." He sighed and looked to the ground, "But I'm not going anymore."

"What? Why?" He pointed at me,

"Because of you." He walked towards me, "This is something I've been trying to deny ever since the night we danced together and tried to forget but I couldn't. Merida," He stopped so close to me and took my hand. He looked straight in my eyes and I felt myself drown in his, "Meeting you was fate and becoming your friend was a choice but," He bit his lip, nervously, "Falling in love with you was beyond my control." I gasped, realizing what he just told me,

"You love me?" He nodded, "I love you too." I threw my arms around his neck while wrapped one around my waist and the other entwined in my hair. We stood silently, "If William finds out, he'll kill you." I whispered into his shoulder. He briefly tightened his grip on me,

"I know."

"I don't want to lose you."

"I know." He loosened his grip and looked at me, our faces so close we could feel each other's breaths, "I know it's risky but it's a risk I'm willing to take." I couldn't reply as he placed his lips on mine. They were rough yet so soft. As he pulled me closer, as he deepened the kiss, I was, for the first time since William entered my

life, truly and utterly happy.

****Inspiration came from a few sources on DA mostly "Beyond my Control" by grandduchesscrazy and "I Know" by kaillet97. I honestly got nothing else to say except that I loved writing this chapter. Merry Christmas! Review, favorite, follow.****

26. Discovery

****It's been forever since I've updated! I swear, the last three weeks I really wished someone would just kill me. I had to write **_**5**_**, yes you heard me, **_**5**_** diplomas! 2 for LA (English), 2 for Social and 1 for Science! But finally it's all done! Now I just have to wait for my results!****

****I seriously cannot stop watching the new HTTYD 2 trailer, even if it's just for the incredible quality of the animation. A question suddenly crossed my mind: if Hiccup looks this damn sexy in this movie, what is he going to look like in the third!?!****

****Be prepared for fluff and maybe some crying. Enjoy.****

****Chapter #24: Discovery****

Freyja smiled down as she watched the impossible happen in Berk. A Viking and a Scot, two enemies in love. Not only were they defying their people but they were defying their society too. A blacksmith and a princess in love.

_After Berk, the two lovers met nearly every day. At sunset, Hiccup would leave the smithy and go to the clearing. Only minutes later, Merida would excuse herself from dinner and take Angus to the clearing. _

Nobody suspected anything, nobody was suspicious. Everybody, except William.

* * *

><p>Merida's POV

Hiccup and I were lying under a tree in the clearing, my head perched on his shoulder and his arm around my waist. I could hear his heart beating strongly in his chest, the consistent sound making me calm.

The wind blew softly through the tree above us, adding to the already tranquil feeling in the clearing.

"Are you sleeping?" Hiccup whispered, moving the hand on my waist to comb through my hair,

"No." I mumbled. He gave me a warm kiss on my forehead. The silence prolonged, only disturbed by nature. I moved my head so that my chin was perched on his chest. We made eye contact,

"What was it like?" He shifted his head slightly and looked at me confused,

"What was what like?"

"Living on Berk." He let out a breathless, sarcastic laugh,

"For me? It was horrible. I was the runt. The other teens made fun of me and my own father put me down. No matter how hard I tried to prove myself, I only ended up making everything worse. Vikings want brawn but I didn't have that. I had brains but they cared little for that."

"Oh," I said with slight disappointment. I had expected his life to be much better than mine, filled with adventures and freedom. How he described it, it made my life seem much better, "And your life here?"

"More than I could've asked for. I have a family that loves me, friends," I squealed loudly when he switched positions with me. I grunted a little when my back hit the hard forest floor but I smiled, "And I have you." He whispered. I giggled like a little girl. Wrapping an arm around his neck, I pulled myself up to kiss him.

He pulled me closer with a grin and gently nipped at my lower lip. I giggled through the kiss which riled him up more. We separated for only a moment to catch our breath before Hiccup plunged down to capture my lips again.

"Merida?" I gasped and in sync, our heads shot up. After a brief moment, I spotted my brothers at the edge of the clearing, staring at us with large eyes. I hastily got up and ran to them, nearly falling onto my knees,

"Please don't tell William!" I all but screamed, "Please!" Hubert and Harris stared at me while Hamish looked at Hiccup,

"You love him?" He asked. I nodded fervently,

"With all my heart." I grabbed his shoulders and looked each of the boys in the eye, "Please, you can't tell William." The boys looked at each other and I noticed the mischievous grin on their faces,

"Your dessert for a year." Hamish said.

"Have it for two; I don't care. Just don't tell William." A moment of silence when Hamish replied,

"We won't say a word."

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Aileen was staring at a waterfall that fed into a shimmering lake. She took in a deep breath, relishing the fresh smell and the calmness it brought. Aileen wasn't stressed about the operation, not even annoyed with Seoc.

She was frustrated with SeÃ²saidh. Always complaining, always critiquing and criticizing how she organized and ran the operation.

"Are you alright?" Aileen looked over her shoulder to see Seoc. She went back to staring at the water,

"I'm fine." she said stoically. She continued to stare as Seoc joined her on the boulder she was sitting on.

"I'm sorry for the way my father has been treating you." He said suddenly. Aileen looked at him questioningly while Seoc sighed, "He thinks I'm a better leader than you."

"And what do you think?" Aileen asked. Seoc was quiet, staring at the hands he was wringing nervously,

"I think you're a much better leader than me." Aileen stared at him in disbelief. Aileen had known Seoc for a very long time. They had grown up together, an experience Aileen had dreaded. Seoc had always been flirting with her, trying to impress her with his supposed mightier warrior skill but she had always, often violently, refused him. To hear him praise her and admitting that she was better at something than him was something Aileen had hardly dared to dream of.

"_The years must've really changed him._" She thought. They exchanged smiles and sat silently for a while, staring at the tranquil water,

"I'm sorry." Seoc suddenly said,

"For what?"

"For being an absolute ass to you when we were younger. I guess I was just trying to get your attention or trying to prove that I could be as tough a Viking as you." Aileen remained silent briefly before nodding lightly,

"You were an ass to me." Seoc chuckled lightly but refused to meet her eyes, "But you know what? You've proven to me that you're not an ass years ago. After all these years, you know what I see?" Seoc stared at her and shrugged his shoulders. Aileen placed a hand on it, "I see a Viking, a true Viking, that is loyal, brave, and honorable to the core." Seoc looked away in hope that Aileen wouldn't see the re tinge spreading on his cheeks. When the burning feeling stopped, he looked at her and gave a sweet smile,

"Thank you." They didn't notice how their eyes were locked and they couldn't stop staring. Slowly, they began to lean closer, and closer, and closer, and then...

"Seoc! Aileen!" The voice of SeÃ²saidh cried in the distance. Aileen opened the eyes she didn't realize she had closed, her breathing heavy. The brown eyes of Seoc were staring right back at her blue ones,

"Seoc!" They heard SeÃ²saidh cry again. Seoc looked up in the direction that his father's voice was coming from. His attention returned to Aileen when she suddenly punched him hard on the shoulder,

"That's for disturbing my peace." Seoc rubbed the spot and gave Aileen an annoyed look. He wasn't all prepared, let alone expecting,

Aileen to grab his shirt and place a kiss on his cheek, "That's for everything else."

* * *

><p>Rapunzel's POV

There had been a pain in back for almost the entire day. As annoying and distracting it was, I managed to ignore it for the whole day.

The rest of the day went as it should've. My days of working have been very peaceful ever since Artair decided to stay behind in MacInroy Castle.

Dinner had just finished and I was carrying dirty dishes back to the kitchen. I was joined by MÃiri. We laughed a little and talked. We dropped off the dishes at the cleaning station when a pain started in my belly. It was very little but it was uncomfortable. I began to rub my belly in hope to soothe the pain,

"Are you alright?" MÃiri asked.

"I'm fine." I replied, continuing to rub my belly but it got more and more painful. A spasm of excruciating pain ripped through my stomach. I screamed,

"Rapunzel!" Several women screamed. They crowded around me, each with an expression of shock and concern. I let out another groan as more spasms wracked through my body,

"Rapunzel?" MÃiri asked

I felt something warm running down my leg. Hastily lifting my dress to feel the warmth, I was praying it wasn't blood. If it was blood, my fear would a reality again. My fear of miscarriage. I've already had 5 miscarriages; I couldn't bear another one.

I pulled my hand up. MÃiri and the other women gasped and I collapsed to the floor for there, on my hand, was undoubtedly blood.

For those of you that don't know what a miscarriage is: a miscarriage is the death of the embryo in a mother's womb. If that still didn't make sense: the baby died in Rapunzel's womb and her body expelled the fetus (that's why she's bleeding). Considering the cleanliness and medicine of the middle ages as well as other factors, miscarriages happened quite a bit. They even happened today but not as much as they did then. PS: you can say I'm mean.

Note to self: this is the first and last time I'm doing a POV fiction. Writing POV is a lot harder than I thought (that's part of the reason of why I constantly have writer's block). So expect fiction written entirely in third person in the future.

I found a post on Tumblr and it instantly reminded me of Merida and Hiccup. lovelyflowinglocks. tumblr. com (forward slash) post/50591161514 (just remove the spaces)

Anyway, review, favorite, follow.

27. Threats

****Three guesses who has been on fanfiction for (almost) a year. Tomorrow, I've been on FF for a year. I was originally going to update tomorrow but honestly, I didn't want to wait.****

****But sadly, the updates will be coming slower. A new school semester has started and I have math and LA (again). Math is not my strongest suit (pre-calculus) and in LA I'm taking a level higher than my previous LA course. My current LA focuses less on the creative aspect (sad face) and more on the critical and analytical aspect (sadder face because I suck at those). I also made it into theater again. We're doing ****_**Fame**_**** this year. And beside school, I have to balance home life and work. ****

****I really wanted to update for Valentine's Day but this chapter is not the most ideal for such a day so that's why I didn't update. Besides, I didn't have time to write that day as I was celebrating my first Valentine's Day where I wasn't single!****

****Also, to the guest reviewer who thought I shipped Snotlout and Astrid: I can't say that they are an OTP but I like the idea of them potentially being a couple. And I can also say that I like Astrid single too. ****

****A word of warning. There is a lot of abuse in this chapter. If that's a trigger or you just can't stand it (because you can't understand why someone would do that), I'm terribly sorry. There's also a little bit of language but it's very brief****

****Chapter #25: Threats****

Third Person POV

William stood by the window with his arms crossed, looking sourly at the scene below him. He watched as Merida mounted her horse and galloped off like she had every day for the past week.

"_Where do you go?_" He had asked himself every time. He suspected it had something to do with the cripple, the blacksmith as one of his spies had reported that Hendry Gallach left the smithy every night for the past week

When the spy reported a little while after that Hendry left the smithy only minutes before Merida did, William's suspicions were confirmed. Merida was seeing someone, a blacksmith and a Viking no less!

William nearly shuddered in fear at the thought that a blacksmith could undo everything he'd done and ruin his plan for power. He was so close. He only needed to solidify his influence on the Queen and the throne of DunBroch was as good as his.

He was so close and wasn't about to lose it all to a blacksmith.

He tore his gaze away from the window when the door opened and General Pitchiner came in and bowed,

"You asked for me, my Lord?"

"Yes. I need you to do a small favor for me. Tomorrow, I want you to bring my fiancée here and I need you to make sure that no one disturbs us." Kozmotis bowed and turned to leave the room but William spoke, causing the elder man to stop, "But before you do that, bring Hendry Gallach to me."

* * *

<p>Hiccup's POV

That night, I was in bliss after returning from the meeting in the clearing. Sadly, it ended the moment I saw General Pitchiner in the smithy. When he stated that William wanted to see me, I thought it was a joke. Why would one of the highest, most powerful men in DunBroch want to see a mere blacksmith? When the General assured me it wasn't a joke, I followed the man to William's chambers.

He opened the door. I gave a small nod and entered, giving a bow as the door clicked into the lock. William stood by the window, his arms crossed and seemingly oblivious to my presence. For 5 minutes, we stood in silence. In the presence of a Lord, it was inappropriate for a commoner to say anything first.

"Hendry Gallach." William suddenly spoke, "It's a good name. A strong, Scottish name."

"My Lord?" He suavely turned around, a smirk on his face. He walked to a little table nearby. He took the silver goblet on it and filled it with wine

"Tell me," He asked as he poured, "do you know anything about Vikings? Way of life, culture perhaps?" I barely managed to quench a gasp. A nervous feeling spread in my stomach and I unconsciously began fiddling with my fingers.

"No," _Lie_.

"Hm," William hummed, "Are you familiar with their dragon lore?" He took a drink from the wine.

"No. I'm not" _Lie_. _William set the goblet down with a clunk, a few drops of the red liquid hitting the floor.

"Then how would you explain the dragon that's black as night being hidden in a cove?" I swallowed past a lump in my throat,

"I don't know what you're talking about." _Lie_. He arched an eyebrow at me and began to chuckle,

"I have eyes everywhere, Hendry. Nothing escapes my sight. I know about the dragon. I know the truth about you." He looked at me and all I saw was pure evil in those brown eyes, "How long did you think you could hide it? How long did you think you could hide your true heritage, your affair with _my _fiancée?" I stared at him in shock. He knew everything. How?

"I-" I tried to interject but William silenced me when he slammed his fists against the desk, the sound echoing in the room,

"You stay away from her! I won't have you touching what is mine!" He seethed. I remained silent, knowing I'd probably say something stupid and reveal more about myself. William took a deep breath and regained his regal posture,

"You know, my father once told me something that I'll never forget. He said: it's from their foes, not their friends, that cities learn the lesson of building high walls. You've built a wall, Hendry Gallach, but you didn't build it high enough. Cross me once more and I'll not only reveal everything behind it but make sure your precious dragon has a little 'accident'. And Merida." He grabbed something from shadow in the corner. It was a stick, a stick a husband would use to beat his wife. He tapped the stick lightly into his palm, the skin becoming redder with each light hit. "Leave." He ordered.

I quickly bowed and left. I went back to the smithy and locked the door. I leaned against the workbench and just stared at an insignificant spot on the floor.

Now not only my life was on the line but Toothless' as well. And Merida would be beaten if I didn't stop seeing her.

Realizing the truth and what I had to do, I began to cry.

* * *

><p>Merida's POV

I felt I could burst from happiness. The moments I spent with Hiccup were the happiest moments I've ever felt. I ran into the castle, keeping myself from squealing too loudly. Everyone I passed barely spared me a glance; most of them were used to it anyway.

I turned the corner and nearly ran into someone. The regal uniform was more than enough to tell me it was General Pitchiner. He informed me in a stoic tone that William wanted to talk to me. I didn't want to talk to him but how could I refuse?

We walked silently. When we arrived, he opened the door for me. I muttered a few words of gratitude and entered.

William was staring out the window, clutching the wooden frame. I curtsied lightly and waited for him to turn around. I cleared my throat. He looked at me, studied me from toe to head and looked back to the window. More silence plagued the room.

"What does the blacksmith have that I don't?" He muttered. I was stunned by his question.

"What?" I asked. He turned on the spot and faced me, anger raging on his face.

"What does the blacksmith have that I don't?!" He repeated. I was flabbergasted. He slowly walked to me, each step he came closer, I took a step back.

"William, I don't know wh-" My voice hitched as I hit the wall, "What you're talking about." He stepped closer, trapping me in between his arms. He leaned closer, the smell of wine fresh on his breath

"Don't lie to me, Merida!" He whispered menacingly. "I know why you sneak out every night." He looked, almost as if he was ashamed, "I know" He stepped away from me, allowing me to breathe. William began to pace around the room. I just watched him. He knew about Hiccup, he knew I was meeting him. My heart prayed that William knew nothing of my love for Hiccup but my mind told me he did know.

"Stop seeing him. He can't give you anything. All he's after is your title and money." I glared at him. I knew Hiccup wouldn't use me as an object to gain power; he'd even told me that he never had ambitions to gain power. I grew angry at the mere thought of William accusing Hiccup of such things!

"Then what are you after!?" I retorted loudly, "My love?" I could see him getting angrier and angrier,

"Stop seeing him." He seethed

"No!" I replied boldly

"What?"

"No!" I repeated. William stared at me with eyes wide with surprise. He took a step closer to me. I took an involuntarily gulp and averted his gaze. The next moment, I heard shattering glass and felt the hard floor. My cheek burned harshly. Something dripped down to my lip and I tasted the revolting taste of coppery blood on my tongue. Shards of glass were sprawled underneath my hands, leaving behind many gashes on my palms that gushed blood. I looked at William as he lowered the hand that had slapped me. He had no remorse in his face.

"I really didn't want to do this, Merida, but you leave me no choice." He pulled forth a long stick. He caressed the smooth wood and I watched him measure the width of it with his thumb, "You best pray that my thumb isn't wide" He lowered the stick and pointed it at me, "Stand up." He ordered. I shook my head,

"No." Silence and then... A swish broke swiftly through the air. A burning pain started pulsating from my leg. I refused to scream; I wouldn't give William the pleasure. I heard the swish again and pain began in my side.

Hit after hit after hit I survived without screaming. He aimed for my head but he painfully hit my protective hands.

He let out a grunt of frustration. The swish was louder, faster. This pain was the worst. And finally, I screamed.

The door slammed open against the wall. Another voice screamed,

"My Lord, stop!" I heard feet running, grunts, and struggle. I looked up to see Kozmotis, his armor shining brightly in the fading sun, holding tight to the hand that held the stick. William was nearly red from anger and struggled against the hand. In some random burst of strength, William threw the General to the wall as if he were a mere ragdoll,

"Stay out of my way, Kozmotis." He lifted the stick to deliver another blow. I covered my head with my red knuckles,

"No!" The General screeched. When I dared a peek, Kozmotis held tight to William's wrist, preventing him from hitting me, "I've followed your every order, obeyed your every command but this I cannot condone." He seethed. William wriggled in his tight grip, unable to get free. The two made eye contact; I saw an evil smirk form on William's face,

"Well, you best condone it if you want your little bitch of a daughter to stay out of harm's way" His smirk curled to a smile as Kozmotis' regal stance slouched, his angry face change to fear. William yanked his wrist free from its chain, "Leave." The General looked at me, his glistening eyes saying 'I'm sorry'. He paced to the door and slammed it shut.

Brief seconds ticked before William spoke,

"Now, you will answer anything I ask truthfully or else." The stick tapped lightly on my shoulder. I flinched at the wood's cold touch and nodded. I didn't see it but I knew he was smiling, "Do you love this cripple?" He interrogated. I kept silent, wiping my nose with my sleeve, leaving behind a small trail of red in the fabric. I whimpered as the stick hit my shoulder, "Do you!?" HE demanded.

"Yes." I whispered. Silence

"Has he fucked you yet?"

"No! Hendry has never touched me illegitimately!" I whimpered. My breathing was labored, my hands shaking involuntarily. I hated William. I never thought I could truly hate until now. What right did he have to do this? To threaten a man's daughter, to beat his fiancÃ©e?

The creak of wood sent a brief and painful reminder that William was still here. When I dared to look, he tapped the stick lightly and consistently into his reddening palm. I looked away and stared ahead of me, "Loving him is a treason against my people." I whispered, not caring whether or not he heard me, "But not loving him is a treason against my heart." I only briefly heard the creak of wood before my head shot to the side. A small tear dripped from my eye as my cheek burned from where William had struck me. I let out a small groan as William's hand pulled painfully at my hair and forced me to look at him.

"Tell him to stay away from what is mine. Otherwise, I'll kill him with my own hands!" He seethed. He let go of my hair and grabbed the stick. He snapped it in half and paced out of the room. I sat perfectly still, pain emanating from all the places William beat me. I heard footsteps but I didn't look up, fixating my sight on an insignificant spot on the floor. Something moved beside me but I still didn't look.

"My Lady, forgive me." whispered the General. I slowly moved my eyes towards him. There was a tear in his eye, "I should've stayed." He sighed and brought his hand to his eyes, trying to hide his tears. I slowly lifted a shaking hand and placed it on his shoulder,

"It wasn't your fault." I whispered, my voice sounding hoarse. The

man shook his head but refused to look at me, continuing his weeping in silence.

I began to weep too. I refused to weep at the thought of William killing Hiccup. I wept at the thought of what I'm forced to do to prevent it from happening.

****Now do you see why I didn't update on Valentine's? I'm looking forward to next chapter as I'm adding some comedic stuff. Also, in the chapter after that, the rating goes up to M for the rest of the story (you have been warned).****

****Review, favorite, follow.****

28. Seperation

****Really short chapter! Next to shortest of this fic, to be precise.****

****Well, I got my diploma marks back. I passed everything! However, I'm rewriting one because I wasn't too happy with the mark. I've also made the decision of what I'm going to write after this fic is done (don't worry, there's still 15 chapters left). I've been wanting to write a Frozen fanfiction for a while and I finally have a good idea. It just needs more planning.****

****Some of you probably know that I'm also on Tumblr (though I'm not that active on it) and I met a diehard fan of this fic. She's been making posts of her reactions to various chapters. So far, she's only done previous chapter and the very first one. Check them out because I found them very funny. This is where you can find them: crossovergirl . tumblr .com (forwards/slash) tagged/until-the-end (just remove the spaces and add a forward slash where it says so)****

****Nothing to report except (maybe) some feels, so please enjoy this chapter.****

****Chapter #26: Seperation****

Merida's POV

I felt unusual as I made my way towards the forest. I had decided to go by foot, my mood and predicament not ideal for riding a horse. I needed to think. As I entered the shade of the tall trees, I tugged uncomfortably at the high collar of my dress, the fabric making my skin itchy.

The words of William still sounded clear and threatening in my ears,

All he's after is your title and your money_

That could never be true. Hiccup had told me himself that he had never had an interest in a wealthy and privileged life. He found joy in hard work and being honestly rewarded for it. He would never use me,

Do you love this cripple?

In ways that neither William nor his puppets could understand. Hiccup makes me feel alive, he makes me feel beautiful, he makes me feel like I could grow wings, spread them and soar higher than any bird in the sky. He makes me feelâ€¦ human.

I'll kill him with my own hands!

That threat frightened me the most. I pray that William only said it as a way to scare me into submission. But if he knew me truly, he would know that I do not submit easily. Of course I was scared; how could I not be? But it didn't matter how many threats he made nor how many times he beat me; I refuse to dance to the tune of his dark fiddle.

The rest of my walk was vacant of mental war. As I entered the clearing and looked up, all my fear was washed away. I felt as if I was floating when I saw Hiccup. With a child-like giggle, I ran to him and hugged him.

But my joy vanished when he pushed me away,

"Hiccup? Is everything alright?" I asked as I tried to place a hand on his cheek, only to have it pushed away. Hiccup mumbled something, refusing to look me in the eye, "What?" He looked up, a small line of tears barely visible in his eyes,

"We should stop seeing each other." I felt my joy shatter. No, this couldn't be happening. It couldn't. He couldn't just give this all up. Had it meant nothing to him?

"Why?" I asked. He looked down,

"It's too dangerous. I'm a Viking, you're a Scot. You're people will not take kindly to that." He whispered but I heard the sadness and uncertainty in his voice.

"Hang the people." I huffed, "What they don't know, can never hurt u-"

"You are a princess, Merida!" He screamed. I was stunned to silence and took a step back. Hiccup never yelled. He had always been a quiet man, having his feelings bottled up, not to be revealed until he felt comfortable to do so. But he never, ever, yelled. He was taking deep breaths and his angry stance slouched, his head bend down, "Me?", he whispered, "I'm a crippled blacksmith. What can I possibly give you?" My breathing was heavy as the words sunk in. There was only truth in his words though. Yes, I was a princess and he a blacksmith but he had given me some much. Happiness, friendship, love. He gave me my life. I wanted to cup his cheek. I wanted to brush away the reluctant tears but I settled on placing my hand on his shoulder. He looked up at me,

"Everything William can't." I whispered with a smile. He was silent for a moment and my hope rose exponentially. He sighed and took my hand off of his shoulder.

"That's not good enough." He whispered and he walked past me, towards the forest.

"Hiccup?" I whispered. He continued walking, his head bowed and his back slouched, "Hiccup!" I screamed but it was no use. He continued his walk and disappeared into the shadow of the forest. I stood and waited, hoping he'd come back and take back everything he said. I stood in that spot, knowing I was wishing an impossible wish. I fell to my knees, clutching my heart as it shattered into thousands of irreparable pieces, and gave my tears permission to run down my cheek.

****This chapter was originally going to be longer but I decided to split it because the joined chapters just didn't feel right. And I also kinda wanted to leave you guys with a cliffhanger. Next chapter will include that comic relief I was talking about.****

****Review, favorite, follow****

29. Pleasure and Love

****The rating goes up now so please read the warnings for each chapter as there may be something that you don't like.****

****It was Spring Break this week but for me it was anything BUT a break. Studying for a diploma rewrite (still not done) and reading a 300 page novel (still not done either). The only reason I was able to update now was because I wrote when I had inspiration.****

****WARNINGS: language, alcohol, brief yaoi, mentions of sex, nudity, and prostitution. ****

****Chapter #27: Pleasure and Love****

Jack's POV

Everyone seemed to be in a sour mood today. Hendry was very quiet and did not even make any sarcastic remark as he left like he had for the past week. Merida didn't seem to be in a better mood either as she went into the forest without Angus. Another thing I noticed was that she was wearing a dress with a high collar, something she never did. I had tried to ask Rapunzel but she was silent.

I was worried about her. Ever since she lost the baby, she was dead. She never smiled, she never laughed, nothing. It was as if her very spirit had left her body, forbidding her from ever feeling happy. Since the miscarriage, she only sat in front of the fireplace, just staring at nothing. I dare say that it scares me.

Wiping the sweat off of my brow, I took aim at the log standing in front of me. In a practice move, I swung the hatchet and sliced the log into two. I stared at the large pile of wood and decided it was enough for now.

I carried the wood into the house and Rapunzel saw in her usual spot by the fireplace. I sighed and carried the wood to the basket beside it. Crouching down, I fed the fire with another log when I suddenly heard a sniff. I turned. My heart broke when I saw a tear rolling down Rapunzel's cheek.

"Is one child too much to ask?" She mumbled. I scooted closer to her and touched her hand, looking when I felt something else. Rapunzel

was cradling a doll but it wasn't just any doll. It was Diana's. Trying to keep the tears from escaping, I cupped her face. She looked back at me briefly before bursting into tears, "How can this be God's plan for me? I don't understand!" She brought her hand to her eyes. At that point I couldn't keep my tears back. Several drops rolled down as I pulled her towards me and embraced her. She continued sobbing into my shoulder as I stroked her hair. It took a long time before her sobs became less violent. I pressed a kiss to her forehead,

"I don't know why terrible things happen to us but I have to believe that something good will come out of it." I whispered. She looked up at me and nodded a little. I gave her a small smile and pecked her pink lips, "We'll get through this, Punz. I promise."

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

The Transylvanian Inn was a welcoming sight. It was filled with a sea of men, with the exception of the whores seducing a customer. There were 9 of them, all of them pretty. About 3 of them were with the musicians, singing and dancing. When I listened, I heard them singing a song half in Gaelic and English. From the words I could understand, the song was about a never-ending celebration, filled with wine and music.

"Hendry Gallach?" A voice called. I turned to the origins and saw Cairbre Donaghue staring at me, "Don't remember ever seeing you here." I was about to reply when he held up his hand and gave a charming smile, "No matter. Take whichever spot suits you." He said before turning to another customer. I nervously looked around the tavern. All the tables were occupied except for one that sat forgotten in the corner closest to the fireplace. I sat down there. I enjoyed the privacy. It allowed me to ponder the question that had bugged me since my encounter in the forest,

Had I made the right decision? Is this really for the best?

My peace was short lived as a prostitute had seen me.

"My, you're a handsome one." She complimented. She sat down beside me, lowering the fabric of her low-cut dress so much I could nearly see her nipples, "These make you weak in the knees?" she teased. I began blabbering like an idiot and quickly looked away, feeling my cheeks turn red, "Oh, you're a virgin are you?" She gave the most childish giggle as she placed herself on my lap and wrapped her slender arm around my shoulder,

"Abi, let the lad be. I can tell he has no interest in women tonight." A voice said behind me. Abi let out a flirtatious groan and left my lap to flirt with another. With a feeling of relief, I turned to look at my rescuer.

She was a woman that I hadn't seen upon entering. She was wearing a dark blue dress with a brown stay over it. The dress had a very wide neckline, showing her pale, slender shoulders, and was tattered at the bottom, revealing her bare legs. She had large blue eyes, lightly curled red hair and round face. I nearly gulped at the resemblance she had to— I turned away,

"No thank you?" She pouted. I felt her petite hand on my shoulder, "You wound me, sir." I looked up at the woman. She looked upset but her child-like grin said otherwise. She let go of my shoulder and looked at Cairbre, who had snuck over without me noticing,

"I must say, Maireada," he said, "for a whore, you do show a lot of decorum." He lifted his hand and tried to stroke her cheek but Maireada grabbed his wrist harshly, seemingly unimpressed with his advancements,

"You may think me naïve, Cairbre, but I'm no fool either." She let go of his wrist, "I do not fall for the petty advancements of foolish men and I, most certainly, do not give my body to them as readily as others!" At this point, the entire tavern had fallen silent at Maireada's lecture. I, myself, was flabbergasted. It was entirely unheard of for a whore to belittle and lecture their customer.

Maireada must've noticed the silence as she looked around the tavern at her gawking audience. She snorted loudly and turned back to Cairbre,

"If you want my bed so desperately, you must first prove to me that you are no fool." With a small swish of her ripped dress, she left the tavern. The aura of merriment that had existed took a while to return. I was still staring at the door when Cairbre suddenly spoke,

"She's a fine one, isn't she?" I nodded.

"She definitely feisty." Just likeâ€|

"Impossible to seduce that bitch!" A drunken man roared, "But I like a challenge!" He stood up onto the table and yelled to the entire tavern, raising his tankard, "Here's to the challenge of seducing the whore Maireada!" The men roared and the girls giggled.

"Here, try this." Cairbre said, placing a large pint in front of me, "Bevvys on me." Hesitantly, I took it.

* * *

><p>Jack's POV

I will never understand how he does it but, Hendry has the uncanny ability to disappear. O had looked everywhere. He was not in the smithy, not in the kitchens, even the guards at the gate had told me that he hadn't left.

I let out an exasperated groan in the middle of the empty market. Where was he? In the distance, I heard the loud, rowdy noises of a tavern. My eyes fell upon the Red Tartan. I knew that Hendry would never go there. It was the place where the whores of the Red Apple and the Blooming Rose did their work, the place where even the most respectable men lost all their dignity to the temptation of drink.

Butâ€|

Hendry had seemed very upset and angry today and had a whole bag of money to spend. Where else would men spend so much money?

I was by the door before I realized what I was doing. I wasn't welcome in this tavern. never have been. I bite my lip and entered.

The stench of alcohol was overwhelming and made me feel sick. The tavern was very crowded and everyone seemed to be gathering around one spot. I moved closer and watched as Hendry, barely keeping his balance on a table, chugging down a large pint. He kept chugging and chugging at the pressure of the other men around him. He gasped for air and the men cheered loudly. Hendry smiled, holding the tankard up proudly and nearly losing his balance.

"Another!" He screamed, smashing the tankard to the floor. The equally drunk men roared with laughter and Cairbre happily refilled their pints. He just refilled Hendry's when he spotted me

"Overland! What are you doing here?!" The room was abruptly silent. Everyone stared at me, all merriment that had previously perfumed the air was gone. Everyone in this room knew that I wasn't welcome here. Damn the MacInroy clan!

"I'm here for him." I pointed at Hendry, who had sluggishly got down from the table with the help of those that were as drunk as him, "Hendry, let's go."

"I don't want to go!" He pouted like a child, earning boisterous laughing. Annoyed, I grabbed his collar and dragged him out of the inn. I continued to drag him until we were almost home. I threw him into an alleyway. He collapsed onto the ground, cradling a bottle he had managed to sneak out of the tavern.

"Are you absolutely out of your bloody mind!?" I screamed as he took a large chug out of the bottle,

"No, I'm sure I'm absolutely in my mind." He slurred and chuckled at his own joke. He readily took another chug,

"You fool! What if you told the truth about what you really are?" He swallowed a rather large mouthful of alcohol before he replied,

"I have been telling the truth. I just haven't been telling all of the truth." He lifted the bottle again,

"Give me that!" I snatched it out of his hand and smashed it to the ground. Hendry groaned loudly and annoyed,

"Stupid Englishman." He muttered loudly. That was the final straw. I roughly grabbed him by his collar and dunked his head repeatedly into a filled rain barrel. He started coughing but I kept going. I finally stopped when he started gasping for breath. He collapsed beside the barrel and I allowed him to regain his breath before I took his arm, wrapped it around my shoulder and started a slow walk home,

"Jack, have I ever told you that you're absolutely gorgeous?" He slurred,

"What?" I stopped walking and stared at him. He stared back with the

most love-struck look a drunk man could muster,

"You really are beautiful." I was going to say something but he stunned me to silence when he suddenly kissed me. It was brief and awkward. He pulled away and smiled, "Take me home, darling?" I was stunned.

"That might be a good idea." I stammered. We continued our very slow walk. As we approached home, I prayed that Hendry wouldn't remember what happened. But I smiled when I realized that he going to have a big headache in the morning.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

The sun was setting on another day as Hiccup walked slowly through the market. He was headed towards a place called the Red Apple. According to a drunkard from last night, it was the place where Maireada worked and lived. Never in his life had Hiccup thought that he would go to a brothel. He had been told from a young age that brothels were the very source of evil and should be avoided at all costs. But something was pulling him to it.

Perhaps it was Maireada. Something about her attracted him. She reminded him an awful lot of

Hiccup shook his head and continued walking towards his destination. As a man had told him, Hiccup found the Red Apple near the entrance of the slums. Compared to its surroundings, it was rather large and well-built. Hiccup stared at the building for a while before taking a deep breath and entered.

Immediately, he was hit with the scent of flowers and perfume. The foyer was a large, extravagantly decorated room with a broad stairway in the middle leading up to the second floor. Adjacent to the stairs stood plants and several benches, most of them occupied by young girls, all waiting for customers. There were several other girls wandering around the room or the stairs but none were the one Hiccup was looking for.

"Good evening, sir!" A woman cried. Hiccup looked up and saw an elder woman coming towards him with spread arms. She was wearing a modest dress and several bracelets and necklaces. Hiccup suspected she must be in charge as no ordinary prostitute would dress in such finery.

"What is it you seek in my humble establishment? Pleasure? Love?" A couple girls nearby giggled and Hiccup blushed.

"I-I came seeking Maireada." He stammered. The girls fell abruptly silent, knowing that he would be just another victim to her rejection.

"Did I hear my name?" Almost in sync, everyone looked to the stairs. There, at the top, stood Maireada. She scanned the room until her eyes fell upon Hiccup, "Oh, hello again." She said softly, slowly walking down the stairs towards him, "What brings you here?" Hiccup gulped and took a step away from the elderly woman in front of him. Maireada continued her walk until she stood directly in front of him,

staring at him with her large blue eyes. Hiccup blushed,

"I came seeking you."

Maireada gave a low seductive chuckle that would've had most men crumble to their knees. she began a slow circle around Hiccup, looking him up and down with teasing eyes. The other girls knew what Maireada was doing. She wasn't teasing or seducing him; she was inspecting him.

Maireada returned to the spot of origin in front of Hiccup. After only moments, she turned back towards the stairs, purposely swaying her hips in an exaggerated manner. She stopped on the first step. With a stare over her shoulder, she beckoned him to follow her. Hiccup obliged, oblivious to the soft, unified gasps of the other girls.

They walked up the stairs and took a left at the top into a long corridor with countless doors on either sides, the walls glowing a bold but dull red. Behind nearly every closed door he passed, Hiccup could hear the faint moans or the screams of pleasure. He blushed again.

Maireada stopped at a random door to the left and opened it, allowing Hiccup to enter first before she did. Considering the setting, the room was average but richly decorated. The furniture was no more than a bed, a dressing table, and a chair but the tapestry, the carpet, and the drapes hanging from the center point above the bed and twirling down beside it gave the room such a vibrant and expensive glow that it could make even the richest lords jealous.

Maireada sat down at the dressing table and looked at her collection of 12 expensive perfumes, deciding which scent she wanted. After a moment's deliberation, she picked up the bottle containing the rose scented perfume,

"You must be wealthy." Hiccup commented as she applied the drops of scented water along her neck and collarbone,

"Not at all," came her chuckled response, "I just have a few wealthy admirers." She carefully resealed the bottle and gently put it back, "But all of them are fools." She rose from her chair and joined Hiccup by his side, "And I will not have fools in my bed, Hendry Gallach."

"And I'm no fool to you?" Maireada looked at him. Slowly, as if with caution, she gave him a small but passionate kiss.

"No." She answered when she pulled away, keeping her grip on his shoulders. They stood silently, Maireada waiting for a sign of consent. She didn't have to wait long as Hiccup leaned down to capture her pink lips in a more passionate kiss than before. She gave a child-like giggle as she wrapped one hand around his shoulders, tugging at his green tunic, while the other made quick work of his belt, letting the leather and the money pouch it carried to clatter to the floor.

Everything escalated so quickly for Hiccup. One moment he stood there, kissing Maireada with an odd heat and tightness forming in his pants, and the next, she pushed him onto her bed.

She skillfully took off her stay and threw her ragged green dress over her head into a forgotten spot, leaving her behind her curvy, naked body. She crawled onto him like a cat, sliding her hands under his tunic and pulling the fabric with her. After discarding the tunic, she began planting kisses on his body, starting by his collarbone and moving down his chest.

When she kissed the bulge expanding in his pants, Hiccup gasped and began panting. He had never felt something like this but Gods, did he like it.

Maireada gave a low, grow-like sound at his gasp, her hand reaching up to the ties of his pants,

"Feels good, doesn't it?" She asked, not expecting a reply as she slowly began to undo the knot, "But you'll see that it gets better."

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

For three nights, I returned to the brothel. For three nights, I slept with Maireada. My heart was screaming at me every time to not do it, to be a good boy and stay home and cry about the pain in my heart instead of wasting it on another. But the scream of my mind yelled louder, yelling at me to be a man, to do what others would do. It was telling me that if I focused on what I left behind, I would never be able to see what was ahead.

I always followed my mind.

Maireada stirred against me, taking me out of my pondering. She yawned and rose stretching. I couldn't help but allow my eyes to wander over her, taking in her glorious nude body and her prominently displayed ample bosom. One of her hands weaved through her ginger locks and she turned her head and smiled at me like a cat,

"Morning" She whispered seductively.

I felt myself harden at her whisper but I tried to suppress it. This was wrong but only now did I realize why. I love a woman with my very being and yet, I'm sleeping with another. I didn't love Maireada; I thought I did but it was merely an infatuation.

I sighed and got out of bed, finding my braie and pants. I heard Maireada sigh and plunk herself back on the bed,

"Goodbye, my lover" She whispered. My pants were just tied when she said that. I turned to look at her,

"What?"

"You're leaving and not coming back." She said, pulling up the thin sheet to cover herself. I was going to retort but she silenced me, "You can say otherwise but if you've been in a profession as this for as long as I have, you learn to read people." She looked at me, "I read you and now I know why you're here."

I sat down on the chair, holding my tunic, and beckoned her to tell me what she thought she knew. She sat up, keeping the blanket up,

"You're in love with another and you gave her up. You came here, hoping you could forget, but you couldn't." Maireada smiled when she saw my stunned look, "How much of that did I get right?" She giggled.

"Everything." I said slowly, still stunned at her accurate observation. Maireada bowed her head, a sudden gloomy look on her face,

"Why did you give her up?" If only I could give a simple answer. It was impossible to give one; there were too many reasons. Because she is royalty. Because she's engaged. Because her fiancée is after my head. Because I'm a Viking.

"She deserves much better than me."

"Hm." She hummed. The room was awkwardly silent for a while, both of us trying to avoid looking at each other, "If I ask you one favor, would you grant it?"

"Yes." Maireada stood up, keeping the sheet around her body. She knelt in front of me and took hold of my hand with her free one,

"Go back to your love."

>"I can't go back to her. She'll never forgive me for what I did." I mumbled, trying to hide the tears that were starting to form. Everything she had said was true. I did come here, hoping I could forget. I tried to forget Merida. I tried so hard but it was futile. Maireada gave my hand a small squeeze before she lifted my chin and forced me to look at here,<p>

"Hendry, if her love for you is as strong as yours, she'll forgive you. If you can convince her you were wrong in your doings, she'll forgive you." She leaned up and gave me a kiss on my forehead. I looked into her eyes, "Go."

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Although the patrols around the outside of the castle were prominent, by the time night all guards were either too tired or too bored to continue into the night. Most never saw the point of doing it either as DunBroch was peaceful and no one, lord or peasant, had quarrels with the king. That's why it was easy for Hiccup to sneak around the castle walls in order to find Merida's window.

He had left Maireada for good and had spent the entire day trying to get an audience with the princess. He had gone to Maudie, Rapunzel, even the king's advisor but they all told him that the princess refused to see him.

Out of options, Hiccup decided he would make her talk to him. That's how he came to be standing under her bedroom window with the determination to climb to it.

He waited until the sun had completely set before turning to the stone wall. With a deep breath, he took a tight hold on the stone and began to climb

****Bevvv is Scottish slang for drink.****

****If you guys are going to complain about something that you think is inappropriate or you're not comfortable with, I'd rather have you keep it to yourself. I posted the warnings before the chapters but you decided to read it anyway.****

****Next chapter might take a little longer than usual because I'm doing another first in writing. What it is, you'll have to wait and see.****

****I'll see you guys later. Review, favorite, follow. ****

30. The Affair

****This took a little while to write as this was the very first time I'm writing a lemon (**Personally, I think there's a severe lack of mericcup NSFW).** I'd like to give a shout out to my friend ShireFolk for helping me with this chapter. Seriously, I can't thank you enough.****

****I'm just going to take a moment to thank each and every one of you for making this my most popular fanfiction. I couldn't have done without you guys. Thank you.****

****FluffyWolfLove on dA drew some fan art of the last chapter. Please go check it out because a) the fan art is awesome and b) because she makes amazing Mericcup art!****

****WARNINGS: Lemon, smut, sex; take your pick. (It doesn't appear until after the first line break. If you're really uncomfortable with lemons, I'm putting a brief chapter summary at the bottom)****

****Chapter #28: The Affair****

Third Person POV

If a hell on earth could exist, Merida knew that she was living in it. She felt like every emotion besides sadness and emptiness had left her very soul. Never a smile, never a laugh. At night she would lie in bed awake and try to cry but that was always impossible; she had run out of tears to cry. By now, she understood why Hiccup had done what he did but that small comfort was not enough to heal the hole in her heart.

The night was bad; the day was worse.

At one point in her life, Merida thought it impossible for one person to make her life miserable. But now, she watched as William's influence grew and she was powerless to stop it. Her father was too politically weak to see it, her mother was drowning in the lies of William's words, and the triplets were too far away to do harm. The Queen had send them away to live with a relative of hers to educate them, to tame them.

Merida knew that William had convinced her mother to do it. He knew that the triplets hated him and that they could see through all his verbal traps.

She couldn't stop him. Every time she tried to speak against him, he would pull her away and beat her spirit. After a while, she fell silent.

By the third day, she had nearly lost all her hope. This was her fate and she had submitted herself to it.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Rapunzel followed Merida to her room and helped the princess change out of her dress into her sleeping gown.

"Is there anything else you require for tonight?" Rapunzel asked as she put away Merida's dress. The princess sat down on her bed and stared absentmindedly ahead of her,

"No." She replied, stoic but somber. Rapunzel sighed quietly. It pained her to see her friend like this but Merida refused to tell her what was wrong.

"Well," the maid said quietly, "have a good night and sleep well." She bowed and nervously spotted the dark spot on the Princess' neck before exiting the room.

Merida walked to the door and locked it for no reason. She leaned her back against the heavy wood and sighed. She stared at her bed, knowing she should go to sleep. Instead, she grabbed a robe lined with warm fur, put it on, and sat down in front of the fireplace, staring into the fire.

The cracking was the only sound that filled the room for a long time. Merida continued staring into the flickering yellow and red, despite the strain it caused. She sighed and slouched further into the chair, closing her eyelids from exhaustion caused by the fire's heat. Several minutes must've passed before she heard something odd. It sounded quiet but very close. It slowly, very slowly, became louder.

Standing in the middle of the room, Merida turned and looked at each corner, every crook and cranny, for the source but she saw nothing.

She looked at the window that she'd left open. Slowly so that the wood wouldn't creak, Merida approached the window. The sound was much clearer now. It sounded like metal hitting stone. She continued to the window. However, a shadow began to cover it. It started at the bottom and quickly expanded to cover the entire sill, blocking the light of the stars and moon entirely. Merida gasped quietly in fear at the sight, taking a nervous glance over her shoulder at the door. Why did she lock it?

The shadow took a step out of the sill, allowing the slightest trace of moonlight to enter the room. In the white light, she could see the

figure much better. It took only moments for her to recognize who it was.

"Hiccup?" She said breathlessly as happiness filled her up and expanded to each part of her body. She even felt tears form in her eyes as Hiccup paced to her and kissed her hard. She flung her arms around his neck and kissed him back with equal passion, pouring every emotion into it.

Hiccup pulled Merida closer to him, running his hand up and down her back as if he couldn't get enough of her body. Gods, how he had missed her. How he had missed this. The happiness, the passion, the love, the feeling of being alive and free. He felt no fear and had forgotten the consequences if he was caught. All he cared for now was her.

He smiled into the kiss and gently nipped at her bottom lip. He felt something, a heat develop in his abdomen when Merida moaned. He had felt it before with Maireada but this was fiery and much stronger.

If air hadn't been a necessity, they would've been in that kiss for an eternity. Panting heavily, they pulled apart, their noses barely touching and staring into each other's eyes.

"I'm so sorry for what I did." Hiccup whispered. Merida blinked away a tear, her hand slipping down to his chest where she could feel the traces of strong muscles, "I was a fool and a coward. I shouldn't have-

"Shh." Merida whispered, placing the tips of her fingers onto his lips to silence him, "I forgive you."

Merida could only manage to get a gasp of breath before Hiccup's lips were on hers once more. She thought for a moment that she tasted tears on his lips but was quickly distracted when she felt his tongue poking a teasing at her lips, seeking entry. She gladly gave it.

Their tongues battled for dominance. Merida continuously let out involuntary giggles as Hiccup lowered his hands to her hips. Slowly and gently, he pushed her until she leaned against the wall.

Merida gasped lightly when her back touched the cold brick but the bother was quickly gone as she felt waves of love, passion, and pleasure flow through her.

Hiccup moved his kisses away from her thin lips and moved from her cheek to her jaw-line to her neck, gently nipping at the pink flesh.

Merida moaned when he bit a little harder and she moved her head away to give him better access.

"Hiccup," She panted, "make love to me." She barely managed to suppress a groan of disappointment when Hiccup stopped his kisses on her skin. He just stared at her as if she had gone mad. Maybe she had gone mad. For as long as Merida could remember, the secret message of her lessons was: stay pure until marriage.

Stay pure.

Stay pure.

Stay pure!

The mantra had followed her entire life and now, when she should be thinking about it, she had ditched it into the mud. She didn't care.

Hiccup took a deep breath,

"Are you sure?" He whispered, lightly caressing her cheek. Merida took the hand and pressed a kiss into the palm,

"Yes." She wrapped her arms around him and gave him a tight hug, whispering into his ear, "I'd rather you take my maidenhead in a night of love than have it stolen in a night of matrimony." She felt more than saw Hiccup nod. He pulled out the embrace and took hold of her hand, leading the two of them towards her bed and expensive sheets.

Hiccup sat down first on the edge and gently pulled Merida down to sit beside him. The two lovers stared lovingly at each for a few moments, their hands still in a tight hold. He brushed the knuckles of his free hand against her cheek before leaning in to capture her lips once more.

Merida hardly felt her back touching the mattress as she submitted to his calloused but soft lips, the same feelings as before returning swiftly. She pulled at Hiccup's tunic, sending him a silent message. He stopped his kisses and Merida watched with a seductive smile as he undid his belt and threw his tunic away from him. Merida felt no shame in blushing. He had a broad chest and broad arms, the muscles from years of blacksmithing lightly and beautifully toned. She found it hard to believe that such a handsome man was born a runt. He leant back down and briefly kissed her before he moved his kisses down her jaw line, down to her neck. He stopped suddenly when he saw the dark spot on her neck,

"What is this?" He whispered as he gently ran his finger over the spot. Merida winced slightly when he pushed down on it lightly. She put her hand over it and looked away, as if in shame,

"Just a bruise." She whispered, hoping Hiccup would just ignore it. She still remembered how she got it. William had been on an anger rampage and had beat her again with the stick. He had stopped at the scream of pain she unleashed when he hit her neck. He didn't apologize nor say any words of comfort; all he said was how it was her fault.

Hiccup gently took her hand and moved it away to reveal the bruise. He knew that William had done that to her and a near unquenchable anger rampaged through his veins for the man but he suppressed it for her sake. He put a light and gentle kiss on it, sending a quick prayer to Eir to let it heal quickly.

Merida let out a quiet moan when Hiccup continued his nipping kisses down her neck and collar bone, his slightly shaking hand going under her gown to caress his way up her leg and thigh, pulling the gown

with him.

Just as the fabric brushed against her stomach and stopped below her breasts, Merida felt shy. She had never felt shy or ashamed by the fact that her bust was smaller than most women but now, lying half naked with the man she loved, the emotion overwhelmed her.

_"This is Hiccup!" _she thought, _"He couldn't care less!_"

"Go ahead." She whispered, giving him the answer to the silent question he had been asking. Within a few seconds, they had discarded the gown and Merida lay completely exposed below Hiccup. He stared at her with his big eyes and she felt her cheeks burning, "What?" She asked shyly, unable to look him straight in the eye.

"You're so beautiful." He whispered. Merida gasped lightly, the words warming her heart even more. She took his hand and placed it on her aching breast, waiting for the same treatment as her lips and neck had. Merida took in a sharp breath as Hiccup began suckling on her budding nipple while he ran and massaged the other one with his thumb. She bit down hard on her lips to suppress a loud moan. It may be night but there were still guards and maids wandering around the castle; they wouldn't hesitate to investigate a sound that didn't belong.

Hiccup left her red breasts and kissed her lips, his hands trailing down her stomach towards her womanhood. Merida gasped loudly when he parted the moist silk folds, feeling for her entrance. After a moment's search, he found the little hole. As he rubbed little circles around the nub, Hiccup felt the bulge in his pants grow even tighter as his lover quietly moaned his name.

Merida never wanted it to end. It all felt so good. As Hiccup continued his worshipping of her with his hand, Merida felt something coming over her. Her entire body felt hot and her muscles felt tight. One more movement of his hand and Merida opened her mouth in a silent scream, her fingers digging painfully into his shoulder and her body arching towards his.

"Did it feel good?" Hiccup asked with a teasing grin as he removed his hand from her womanhood. Merida tried to give him an annoyed look but was so spent she couldn't. Instead, her eyes caught the bulge in his pants. She was no fool. In quick motion, she put her hand on it. A feeling of victory she felt when Hiccup gave a suppressed groan.

"You like this?" she said seductively, smirking at the fact that she found his weakness. Hiccup nodded, his eyes squeezed shut. With a devilish smile, Merida began to undo the tie to his pants, much too slow in the man's opinion. It seemed forever before the ties finally undone but then Hiccup realized he still had his braie to do.

With the impatience of a child, Hiccup undid his braie and threw the material, along with that of his pants, down his leg, cursing when the fabric became entangled with his fake leg. Quickly taking off the leg and placing it down quietly with the fabric, Hiccup was completely exposed.

Merida blushed heavily when she saw his manhood, standing with pride; she had never seen a man naked before.

Hiccup settled himself in between her legs, placing his manhood at her entrance. His hands rested themselves beside her head and he leaned closer so that their noses brushed against each other.

"Go ahead." Merida whispered, snaking her arms around his shoulders, bracing herself for what's to come. Hiccup gave her a quick kiss.

"I'll try to not hurt you."

"You won't" She assured him. Letting out a breath, Hiccup slowly began to ease his way into her, groaning as Merida's muscles tightened around his shaft. Merida squeezed her eyes shut at the friction she felt and dug her nails into his shoulder, causing him to grunt. He kept going until he hit a wall; her maidenhead, her last chance to pull back.

"Keep going." Merida panted. With a quick nod, he leant down and captured her lips. Hiccup's forcefulness as he broke the wall caused Merida to cry out, though it was muffled by his kiss.

Hiccup moved inside her with a slow pace, waiting for her to accommodate to him being inside her.

Merida clutched his hair as a small tear ran down her cheek at the raw friction she felt in between her legs. It wasn't as painful as when he first entered her but it hurt nonetheless. In an instinctive move, Merida moved her hips, nearly matching Hiccup's rhythm and the pain lessened. Hiccup let out a groan.

Smiling gleefully, Merida pulled Hiccup closer to her and kissed him hard, moving her hips to match his pace. The pleasure was overwhelming for the both of them and they had to be careful to not make too much noise.

Hiccup began to move faster. He suddenly struck a certain spot inside her, causing Merida to gasp quietly and unconsciously wrap her legs tighter around Hiccup, inviting him deeper into her.

Hiccup moaned and he began to move faster, leaning down to a passionate kiss and aiming for the same spot.

Merida continued to let out muffled moans as Hiccup continuously hit the same spot that send waves of pleasure through her. She left the kiss to gasp for breath as the same euphoric feeling as before came to her again. The feeling overwhelmed her in a stronger current than before and she clutched onto Hiccup biting into his shoulder to suppress a scream.

Hiccup came only moments later, biting his lip as he released his seed inside her.

He collapsed onto her but didn't crush her, panting heavily as little drops of sweat came down his forehead.

Merida felt him slip out of her and lie down on the spot beside her, suddenly feeling incomplete. She shuffled closer to him and kissed him, tasting the slightest trace of blood,

"I love you." She whispered against them. Hiccup wrapped his arms around her, just barely clinging to consciousness,

"Jeg elsker deg ogsÃ¥." He whispered back just as he fell asleep with Merida in his arms.

What Hiccup said was "I love you too" in Norwegian. Some of you are probably wondering what a braie is. Simply put, braie are the medieval underwear for men.

I know that some of you will be mad that Hiccup didn't get slapped or something like that because of Maireada but I can't find a place to fit that scene in. Besides, what Merida doesn't know can't hurt him.

I really wanted to try to add the cover into to this but I just couldn't fit it in.

PLEASE READ THIS

Could you guys maybe do me a small favor? I don't mind it if you guys say "please update soon" but it gets annoying when it's the ONLY thing in a review. All I'm asking is: if you're going to say "please update soon", please write something else too. Something about the chapter that made you laugh, made you cry, predictions for upcoming chapters, whatever. Just please, write more than "please update soon".

EDIT: I got a lot of inspiration of this chapter from the mericcup fanfic "Unexpected Pleasure" by FightingDreamer001. So a shout out to that wonderful lady :D

Review, favorite, follow.

Chapter Summary

**The general gist of it is that Hiccup climbed into Merida's room through the window, he apologizes and they have sex. **

31. The Question

Really quick update! Weren't expecting that were you?

**There are a lot of time lapses in this chapter, just so you know. The reason is I couldn't figure out anything to put in between for a smoother transition. I hope my description in the chapter won't make it too confusing for you. **

And just for a fun note, the title is somewhere in here. See if you can spot it.

One thing: the story goes into Jack's POV. Just to let you know (to avoid even more confusion), Jack still doesn't know Hiccup's real name.

WARNINGS: None (if you can believe it)

Chapter #29: The Question

Third Person POV

Hiccup woke up when the morning sun came peeking through the open window he had climbed through the previous night. Rubbing his tired eyes with his free hand, he looked down at the redheaded siren lying with her head on his chest and his arm wrapped around her waist.

Hiccup smiled at the sight of her peaceful face, unable to resist pressing a tender kiss to her forehead. She hummed but remained asleep.

He smiled at the beautiful sound. But his reverie was short-lived as the weight of what he had done was finally felt.

He had slept with a royal woman and had taken her virtue in a night of unbridled love. What made it worse was that her fiancée was after his head. Hiccup felt a surge of fear at the thought of what William would do if he found out; the lovers would have to be careful if this dangerous affair was to continue.

He looked down at her, realizing that he would have to leave now if he didn't want to get caught by the awakening castle. Giving her another kiss, he whispered,

"I love you." Painfully slow, he moved her off of him. Once she was nestled comfortably, he collected his prosthetic and clothing. He put on his braie, pants, and strapped on his fake leg,

"Don't leave." Merida's voice said quietly. Hiccup turned and stared at her, her blue eyes staring back with the beginnings of tears. With a sad expression, he walked back to the bed, placing his arms on the mattress as he crouched down beside the wooden frame. Merida reached out and took his hand, placing a small kiss on the knuckles,

"Please." She begged. Hiccup sighed, tucking a stray curl behind her ear,

"I can't stay." He whispered, trailing his fingers down her temple and cheek. Merida closed her eyes and sighed,

"Then promise me you'll come back when it's night again." Closing his eyes, Hiccup nodded,

"I promise." He leant forward and gave her a kiss. He quietly left the bed and continued to dress himself. Just as he finished buckling his belt, he felt Merida snake her arms around his chest in a tight hug. Hiccup chuckled, placing his large hands on her small ones.

"I love you." She whispered, hugging him a little tighter. Turning around, breaking the hug, Hiccup looked at her, fully clothed in her night gown. Cupping her face, they passionately kissed,

"I love you too." He said. They leant in to kiss again when they heard footsteps coming from the other side of the door, "Time for me to go." He sighed. With one lasting peck, Hiccup went to the window and began his decent down.

Merida stood silently, staring at the window and feeling lonely yet

happy at the thought of last night. Her trance broke at the sound of more footsteps, making her realize that the door was still locked. More silent than a cat, Merida slipped to the door and unlocked it, praying that no one heard the silent click. With the same stealth, she ducked into her bed, pulled the blanket over her and pretending to be asleep as she knew that Rapunzel could walk in any moment.

She was right.

5 minutes had barely passed when the maid came walking in. Rapunzel immediately caught the sight of the open window but gave it little thought. The smile she had on her face disappeared when she saw the figure of her friend in the bed, reminding her at the gloomy and depressive state the princess had been in.

"Merida, wake up." She said as she walked to her, shaking her shoulder gently, "It's a new day." The princess turned. Rapunzel grew confused when, instead of the emotionless face, there was a bright smile. Merida sighed contently,

"Rapunzel," She said, sitting up straight and taking her friend's hands, "It's a new world". Merida gave a infectious bright smile before she jumped out of bed and ran to her closet, picking up the one dress she could put on by herself. She had it on in a second. She ran out of the room, giggling like a little girl, and left an even more confused maid by the bed.

Rapunzel stood awkwardly by the bed for a while before she remembered she had duties to fulfill. She pulled the blanket off of the bed. In a mere second, her confusion became suspicion.

Merida had had her monthly bleeding about a week prior but there, on the sheets and mattress, was undoubtedly a large stain of blood.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

The forest of DunBroch was silent at night, the life of the forest settling when the sun set. An lone owl hooted and in the great distance, another replied. With a swoosh, the lone owl left the branch and flew towards the sound, barely sparing a glance at the small abandoned cottage built inside a hill. The cottage had once belonged to a witch, the same one that had given Merida the spell that changed her mother into a bear. It had once been destroyed but the witch had repaired after returning from a fair. Shortly afterwards, she was captured and accused of witchcraft and heresy.

What happened to her is unknown. Some say she escaped; others say she was killed. Whatever her fate, all that is known is her home, which many call the "Abandoned Witch's Cottage". Few dare to go near it as it is rumored at the spirit of the witch still haunts the small building.

That rumor was not enough to keep the two lovers away.

After Merida had unexpectedly visited Hiccup in the smithy during the day, they had decided to go to the cottage as they would have no fear there of being caught. While the gates were open, they snuck out

separately. Merida went out first, sneaking some sweet cakes, apples, and candles with her. At arrival, she undid her cloak and lay it out on the empty floor like a carpet. After placing the food on the cloak, she spread out the candles all around the floor, lighting them before allowing the forgotten fireplace to blaze again.

She was just finished when Hiccup came, warmly wrapped in his foot length wool cloak. They first sat down on Merida's cloak, enjoying the cakes and apples she brought. But it wasn't long before they were in a passionate kiss.

The love they made was much sweeter and more passionate than the night before. Without the fear of being heard or discovered, they moaned and cried out each other's names as they worshiped each other. When they finished, they refused to go to sleep.

Merida lay on Hiccup's chest, his cloak keeping them warm. With her eyes closed, she ran small random patterns on his chest. Hiccup had his arms wrapped around her, smiling while rubbing gently on her back. A lot of time passed with very little spoken but they didn't care; they were just happy with each other's presence.

Suddenly, Merida let out a sigh.

"What is it?" Hiccup whispered. Merida opened her eyes and ceased the patterns with her hand,

"Just thinking." She replied,

"About what?"

"How much better my life would've been if I was going to marry you instead of William." She fell quiet and her eyes fell in sadness. The silence pursued,

"Elope with me." Hiccup said suddenly. Merida's eyes shot open and she looked down at him, in shock and surprise,

"What?"

"Elope with me." Merida opened her mouth but no sound came out. She was at a loss of words. Hiccup sat up, causing Merida to slide off of him. Taking the cloak to cover herself, she stared down at the floor, "Merida," He whispered, cupping her face, "I can't bear to see you suffer. Run away with me and we can live the rest of our lives in freedom, without fear or hiding."

Merida sighed, taking hold of his wrists as tears came to her eyes. She wanted to run with him. More than anything but-

"I can't" She whispered, "If I run and William finds out, the things he'll do to my family, my people—" She couldn't hold in the tears anymore. Pushing his hands away, she covered her eyes and started sobbing quietly.

"Merida," Hiccup whispered sadly. He took her hands away and cupped her cheeks, kissing away the tears, "If William does anything to DunBroch or your family, I swear I'll fly back on Toothless and fight him until he can do nothing to you or anybody. I'll fight him until the end." He gave her a quick kiss, "Merida, will you marry

me?"

Merida was silent, her breathing heavy. Tears formed in her eyes again but these weren't tears of sadness but of joy. She nodded,

"Yes." She through her arms around him and hugged him tight, "A thousand times yes."

* * *

><p>Jack's POV

Another night and day had passed where Hendry Gallach had disappeared. Not that I had any say in what he does but he could be more careful if he wanted to remain hidden.

The sun was setting on another day. I was cutting wood while Rapunzel was picking herbs from our small garden with a beautiful smile on her face. She had been happier the last days and I was glad for that. A sad, gloomy face doesn't fit her.

I wiped the sweat off of my brow and almost lifted the axe to swing when I caught the sight of Hendry, coming towards us. I thought for a moment I saw someone following him but when the figure ducked to the right, I dismissed it. When he was close enough, I yelled,

"Well, look who finally decided to show up." I meant it in both a serious and comical way. Hendry laughed lightly as he stopped beside me. I put the axe down, "Where have you been?" Hendry's face suddenly became serious, glancing over his shoulder,

"I have to talk to you." He eyed Rapunzel, "Both of you." I looked to Rapunzel. She nodded, taking the picked herbs and walking into the house. I followed her and Hendry me. Once we were inside, Hendry scanned outside once more before closing the door and locking it. He then walked to each shutter, scanned the view and closed it. It was dark, the only light coming from the fire place,

"Hendry, what is going on?" Rapunzel asked as she lit a candle and placed it on the table. Hendry sighed and began talking.

He explained everything. The moment he met Merida, when he realized he loved her, everything without a minute detail spared. I was both surprised and shocked at his confession of love. It did explain some behaviors of Merida in the last few days. I knew I shouldn't be consenting it but I couldn't. Love was a glorious thing and that was something William could never give Merida.

It was night when Hendry finally finished his story and revealed his intentions to us. The room was silent,

"You want to elope with her?" Rapunzel asked carefully. Hendry, sitting down on a chair with his elbows on the table, nodded,

"Yes." He looked up at my wife, "And she said yes." He looked at the both of us with pleading eyes, "I heard that the patrols have increased and that the gate will closed much earlier. You've helped people escape before. Please help us escape." I bit my lip at his plea. The patrols had increased at the demand of William and without

the information of the triplets, it would be much more challenging to help anyone escape. But we had done this so oftenâ€¦

I looked at Rapunzel. She smiled and took hold of my hand, giving it a small squeeze of support. With a deep breath, I said,

"We'll help you."

****Review, favorite, follow.****

32. A Night with No Tomorrow

****I getting used to writing in POV writing again, so please forgive the terribleness of it.****

****WARNINGS: Violence, blood, and a character death****

****Chapter #30: A Night with No Tomorrow****

Merida's POV

Tonight was the night. Tonight, I will elope with Hiccup and start a new life. No more responsibilities, no more arranged marriage. I'll no longer be "Princess Merida of DunBroch". I'm going to be just "Merida".

The wait had been agonizing. It had taken a day and a half to gather all the supplies. Food, water, a map of England, and enough money to last several weeks.

The plan was simple. Jack and Hiccup would leave first through the gate with all the supplies and go into the forest, under the pretense of travel. Rapunzel and I would leave the castle at night, using the hidden passage my mom and I had used several year prior. The four of us would meet in the clearing. From there, Hiccup and I would fly away on Toothless, to freedom and adventure.

In preparations, I had put on a simple traveling dress and a cloak. My bow and quiver lay ready beside a small pouch filled with jewelry that could easily be sold to a merchant. My last preparation was a letter to my mom. As diligently as I could, I wrote my reasons for running away. At the end, I vowed to her that I would return if William attempted anything to my family or DunBroch.

Just as I signed my name, Rapunzel entered the room, wearing a black dress and cloak, her usual braid done up in a low bun,

"You ready?" She asked. I quickly folded the letter and placed it on a spot on my desk where I knew my mom could find it. I strapped the quiver on my waist and slung my bow over my shoulder. Lastly, I strapped the pouch around my waist so that it wouldn't collide with the quiver. I looked at my friend,

"Yes."

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

Though the crescent moon shined brightly in the sky, it only casted a faint light onto the earth. It's light reflected beautifully from the creek, giving the babbling water an ethereal glow. By the boulder, next to the creek, lay my traveling pack, filled with all the supplies and my riding vest. I had decided to not wear my leather armor; we had to travel light and fast.

Jack had taken a seat upon the boulder, poking at the ground with a stick he had found. It was a long stick of oak and it had a striking resemblance to a shepherd's crook.

I couldn't bring myself to sit down; I was too nervous and impatient to stand still for even a minute. I had paced around the clearing for the last half hour, the grass below me beyond trampled.

An eternity and a minute had passed before Rapunzel and Merida appeared from the deep, dense shadows of the forest. The instant she was out of the forest line, Merida came running to me. I caught her in a tight hug, spinning her in circles as happy squeals escaped from her pink lips. The moment I put her down, she kissed me.

When we heard giggles, we separated and looked at Rapunzel, standing beside Jack, holding tightly to his hand. Merida walked to her friend and hugged her tightly, sniffing a little,

"Thank you so much for everything." Merida said. Rapunzel gave her a squeeze before the two women separated. She smiled at her and at me,

"I wish you every happiness." She said in a voice choked with happy tears. As the women embraced again, I looked at Jack. He smiled but there was a trace of sadness in it. I took a step to him,

"You sure you won't come with us?" I asked. Jack sighed and shook his head just as Rapunzel broke the hug, intrigued by my question.

"Yes, I'm sure," Jack said with a tone of finality. Rapunzel walked to his side, taking his hand again, "There are still plenty of Vikings in DunBroch; we can't abandon them now." Merida took hold of my arm and looked questioningly up at me at the word "Viking". I shook my head,

"I'll explain later." I whispered.

"Alright." She replied. Leaving her grasp, I went to the boulder and pick up my pack, slinging it over my shoulder. Crickets began to glow as I walked back to Merida and took her hand, "You ready?" A bright smile crept up on her face and she nodded. I gave one last look and smile towards Jack and Rapunzel, the ones who had done so much for me and Merida, "Thank you." After they gave their sign of acknowledgment, we turned, hand in hand, towards the forest to go to the cove. But we had barely set a foot down, when we heard something approaching us. It wasn't animal; it was too loud to be an animal. I looked over my shoulder, at the spot that Rapunzel and Merida had come from, when Jack yelled,

"RUN!" He took the shepherd crook and held it in a fighting stance. There, entering the clearing, were soldiers, MacInroy soldiers.

A sling had magically appeared in Rapunzel's hand. Quickly grabbing a

stone, she swung and the stone flew. Whether the stone had hit anyone, I didn't know as I had started to pull us towards the trees. Merida lifted her skirt inappropriately high and began to run but skidded to a stop when more soldiers appeared. I nervously glance around the clearing but there was a soldier at each angle.

We were surrounded.

The spears and pikes pointed at us forced us back, slowly trapping ourselves in a tight circle. I frantically looked at Merida. Tears were staining her eyes when she realized that we had been betrayed.

I heard a chuckle being carried on the wind. I turned and saw William MacInroy, entering the clearing prideful on his black horse. He smiled evilly at me.

"Capture them," He ordered, "But no harm comes to my fiancée." The soldiers moved closer to us. I gulped loudly.

"NO!" A voice cried. In sync, we all looked up at the sight of two horsemen, one on a white horse, the other on a brown one, charge into the clearing. Merida smiled unnaturally,

"They're friends," She cried, "They'll help us!" She cupped her hands around her mouth, "North!"

"_Vashe Velichestvo!_" The one on the brown horse - North - yelled back. He turned the brown stallion and charged at the soldiers. Lifting his sword, he cut down a soldier and retreated again. The other rider had jumped off of his horse and began fighting on foot.

"Cut them down!" William screeched. A lone soldier nodded and took his bow in hand, notching an arrow into it. He aimed at North, who was fighting a few brave soldiers that dared to attack him. I began to fight the wall of guards, together with Merida, but to no avail,

"No!" Merida cried, reaching out to North. The archer smiled smugly and released the arrow. Merida watched with horror as it sailed through the air until it lodged itself in North's arm. HE cried out in pain and, in his weakest moment, the soldiers pulled him off his horse, the frightened creature running into the forest and disappearing. North fought but his arm made it hard to resist.

As the soldiers roughly pulled the arrow out, pinned his arms behind his back, and dragged him towards us, two soldiers grabbed me and forced me to my knees, one of them keeping my arms behind my back as they searched my belonging. They pulled out the money and chuckled greedily. I turned my head and saw them do the same with Jack, Rapunzel, North and the other rider, chuckling louder and more greedily as they pulled four bags filled with money out of North's coat.

I looked to the only one still standing free: Merida. She stared at me and mouthed,

"Toothless."

Hope surged through me. I almost called him but something stopped me. I looked around at the soldiers. There were at least 30 of them, all of them with more weapons than one man could hold. With a sinking heart, I realized that Toothless could never win against them. Sadly, I put my head down and my mind remained silent.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

William jumped off his horse with a smug smile on his face. He slowly walked towards his prisoners. The English filth, the two bandits that had plagued him for years, and the blacksmith that could've destroyed everything. He chuckled lightly when North gave him a dirty look.

"Take them away!" William ordered almost gleefully as he turned around, taking hold of Merida's arm to take her with him.

The soldiers started dragging them all up roughly, not caring when North yelled out in immense pain. Flynn began to struggle against his captors, his eyes staring frighteningly large at William,

"Wait!" He yelled, "William, wait!" Both the soldiers and William stopped abruptly in their paths. The Lord turned menacingly slow, a deadly glare staring at Flynn. Letting go of his fiancée, he walked to the bandit as the soldier forced him onto his knees, pulling on his hair so that he faced William.

William slowly drew his sword, pointing the tip at Flynn's throat. The bandit was unafraid,

"It's 'My Lord' to you, filth!" William pointed the tip against Flynn's Adam's apple, causing the bandit to flinch in fear. It was eerily silent as William withdrew the sword at the sight of Flynn's fear. He almost chuckled at his almost victory,

"No," Flynn replied, "It's always been William for me." The bandit looked at the lord with the pain of memories on his face, "Do you remember a boy named Eugene Fitzherbert?"

For a moment, it seemed as if William's harsh, stoic face softened but it quickly returned to his cruel face. He pointed the sword back at Flynn,

"I've never known someone with such a hideous name." Flynn flinched slightly before regaining his former pose,

"That's a lie!" He said, "You did know someone with that name! An orphaned Anglo-Saxon boy!" William's face slowly began to turn red with oncoming rage. He pointed the sword at Flynn's heart,

"Do you not know who I am, thief!? I am William MacInroy!"

"I know very well who you are!" Flynn yelled back, standing up to stare William in the eye despite the soldier holding him back. One more powerful yank and he would've been free. The two men stared each other down, "Do you still have The Tales of Flynnigan Ryder?"

"I have never heard of that book." He whispered. Flynn gasped lightly

at his harsh words, a rim of tears forming in his eyes. William smirked, "Take them away!" He ordered. The guards began their rough pulling and pushing again,

"What happened to you, Will!?" Flynn screamed. William stopped in his tracks but refused to look at the bandit. Flynn began to struggle so much that a second guard had to come and restrain him but despite their efforts, they could not move the struggling bandit, "What happened to the friend I once knew!? WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM!?"

"ENOUGH!" The swish of a sword ran through the clearing. Flynn groaned in pain; Rapunzel screamed in horror. William stared down at the sword that he had run through Flynn, the tip protruding from the bandits back with blood dripping from it. For a while, all that could be heard were William's pants and Flynn's weak breaths. Flynn looked into William's eyes and he saw something. He couldn't quite figure out what but it wasn't anger or rage or loathing. Flynn cried out weakly as William swiftly withdrew the blade, "Get them out of my sight!" He seethed.

"Yes, my Lord." The guards answered nervously. With a little more care, they pulled the bleeding bandit with the other guards, the bandit just barely able to stay on his feet.

William paced back to his horse, roughly grabbing Merida with him. She cried out but he paid her no heed.

"Get up." He ordered when they stood beside the black stallion. Merida stared at the large beast, hesitating. William slapped her on her cheek, "Now!"

Nodding and crying, Merida jumped onto the horse, William taking the spot behind her. He took the reins but didn't kick his horse as he caught Merida staring longingly at the blacksmith as he was being dragged away. William snaked his hand around her throat and whispered into her ear,

"If you remain silent, I'll make certain they live."

* * *

><p>Jack's POV

The dungeons of DunBroch. A large, filthy, rat-infested dump that would've made a whorehouse seem like a king's palace. Most prisoners died from disease before the torture or execution could; they were the lucky ones.

The guards mercilessly continued to drag us down further into the dungeon, caring little for the ones who were injured. We stopped suddenly. I heard the jangle of keys and saw the guard in charge of the keys come and opened the door. The wood creaked loudly and Rapunzel screamed when a large black rat came scurrying out of the dark room. Without warning, the guard shoved me in. I just barely avoided falling onto the floor. Next came Hendry; he could just keep his balance.

I heard voices for a moment and North came walking in calmly with Flynn's arm slung over his shoulder. Flynn looked very pale and his

head hung heavily. His chest seemed unmoving but the weak moans and groan he made were the only indicators that he still was alive. I spared a glance at his injury. The blood soaked majority of his blue vest and white shirt.

I turned to the door when the guards laughed. They placed Rapunzel in front of the door and shoved her harshly inside. She screamed as she hit the straw-covered floor.

"Rapunzel!" I yelled. I fell to my knees beside her as the guards hollered cruelly and locked the door with a loud thunk, "You alright?" I asked. In the minimal light, I saw her nod,

"I'm fine." She assured me.

"Flynn?" North's voice said suddenly, a trace of panic in it. We looked at the same time. North had rested Flynn against the wall. He was deathly still.

Rapunzel rushed to him. I crouched down beside her as she felt around his throat and chest,

"He's alive!" She exclaimed. She glanced to his wound then at me, "Jack, give me your cloak!" I nodded and fumbled with the ties, my shaking hands not making it easier. Finally, I got the cloak off. Rapunzel snatched it out of my hands and immediately wrapped it tightly around Flynn's waist. The sudden pressure caused him to cry out in pain. He continued to cry out and pant heavily and unsteadily.

"Flynn! Calm down!" North cooed. The dying man looked up at his friend with begging eyes, tears rolling down his cheek.

"Flynn?" Rapunzel said softly and gently. Flynn changed his gaze to my wife. She smiled, "You're gonna be fine." She moved her hands to start treating the injury.

"No." Flynn croaked and he tried to push her hands away.

"Please, Flynn." She begged, reaching to the injury, "Just let me help y-"

"No!" He screamed, grabbing her wrist harshly. He went into a bout of coughing, blood coming out of the edge of his mouth. It was an eternity before the bout ended and he let go of her wrist, "Please don't." He begged. He closed his eyes, another tear running down his cheek, "F-For 15 years, I had a dream I dreamt that William was still the same boy I once knew. That he still was my friend but he is gone and now I-" He hissed and bit his lip, fighting a spasm of pain, "I know he's not coming back. I failed." t was silent for a long time as everyone took in his story. His ragged breathing was all that was heard. Suddenly-

"Rapunzel?" He whispered. Rapunzel looked at the dying man, trying to keep a brave face while smiling at him,

"Yes?"

"I-I'm scared. Please help me to not be. Can-Can you sing that healing song from the story about the girl with the magic, healing

hair." Rapunzel gently took his large, calloused hand into her small, soft ones.

"Sure." I turned away. I walked to the high, barred window, staring out to the night sky. Hendry joined me. We said nothing, finding an odd sense of calm when Rapunzel started singing,

Flower, gleam and glow

Let your power shine

Make the clock reverse

Bring back what once was mine

Heal what has been hurt

Change the Fates' design

Save what has been lost

She let out a sob but she kept singing with a trembling voice

Bring back what once was mine

What once was mine.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

William sat silently by the fireplace, staring into the flames as he toyed with a book on his lap. It was a small book, the parchment protected by a hard, worn leather cover. There were no letters engraved on the cover but William knew very well which book it was. Slowly he opened it. The sick yellow parchment displayed the title of the book: The Tales of Flynnigan Ryder. William moved his eyes down to see the ragged initials signed at the bottom: E. F.

The knock at the door caused William to slam the book shut and hide it underneath the bear hide in front of him,

"Come in." He said stoically. The door creaked open to reveal CinÃjed. The scar-faced man bowed,

"My Lord," He spoke, "Flynn Ryder is dead." William's eyes widened at the news. He knew he should feel elated at the news; a menace was finally gone but somehow, he was incapable of feeling happy.

"Thank you." He replied stoically. He turned back to the fireplace, swinging a dismissive hand. CinÃjed bowed and left.

The lord stood staring at the fireplace, a million emotions rampaging through him at once. He retrieved the book from under the bear hide. Anger boiled in him and with a yell, he threw it in the fire. The old parchment cracked underneath the intense heat. One loud pop and William reached into the fire, almost burning his hands, and pulled the book out, letting it fall to the ground. The corners were burnt black and the leather cover smoked.

As the mysterious emotion of sorrow overwhelmed him, William leant forward towards the ground, pulling at his hair. He felt something on his cheek, something unfamiliar and wet. He touched it and felt the tears. For the first time in years, William MacInroy cried.

****I have a feeling that all of you will slowly start to hate me after this chapter and the majority of the ones that follow.****

****Review, favourite, follow****

33. The Crack of the Whip

****I'm still getting used to writing in POV again.****

****WARNINGS: Torture, blood, language****

****Chapter 31: The Crack of the Whip****

Third Person POV

William fiddled irritably with the folded letter in his hands, consistently opening and closing it. He had read the words no less than a hundred times but words retained the same feeling of reading them for the first time. Cinãjed had given it to him the previous night, claiming he found it on the princess' desk after he saw her running out her room with a figure clad in black. The letter had revealed her attempted elopement with the blacksmith. If Cinãjed hadn't found it, they would've gotten away.

Smirking at the thought, he folded it and put it away.

William dropped himself lazily into a chair with a loud sigh as Cinãjed entered the room. The two men spoke casually for a while, Cinãjed gloating over the victory achieved at Flynn Rider's death. William smiled and nodded, agreeing with the words with pure lies. Not long after, they came to the topic of the other prisoners.

"I want you to deal with St. North." William said, pointing at Cinãjed, "Get him to tell you where the money is by any means. I want it back. All of it." The scar-faced man nodded,

"What of the others?" He asked. William stood up and walked to his desk,

"I will ensure treason." He picked up a piece of parchment, folded in half, "With this." He handed it to Cinãjed. He skimmed over the words until he saw the name signed at the bottom,

"Is this real?" He asked. William laughed heartily and took the parchment back,

"Of course it isn't but the King won't care. If Kozmotis finds this letter in the English filth's home, His Majesty will be convinced instantly and want nothing more than to see their heads on spikes." William handed the letter back to Cinãjed, giving a silent order. The man took it and nodded his head,

"What of the blacksmith?" He asked. William turned away and looked out the window,

"I have something special in mind for him."

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

The dungeon was terrible. It was dirty and gritty and it stunk. We had no light except for the little light that beamed through the barred opening in the door and the barred window imbedded in the wall near the ceiling. During the day, it was hot and stuffy but at night we sat shivering as if it were the middle of winter. And you could do little to pass the time. No merry music nor light chatter could help pass the time or lift the mood, not with the constant fear of torture and death scenting the air.

Jack had resigned himself to sit on the floor with Rapunzel, keeping a comforting around her while playing with her hair. North paced around mostly, his abandoned coat lying in the corner. He had been muttering in a foreign tongue, rubbing his face and neck in a nerve-wracking manner. I suspected it was because of Flynn.

Less than an hour after his death, the guards came to collect his body. I suspect he's now rotting in a mass grave filled with the skeletons of other bandits. North had had a few outbursts of anger and grief. In the first one, he destroyed the only furniture in the cell: a stool. The pieces lay scattered across on the floor.

I had resigned myself to leaning against the wall, staring out into the free world. I tried to talk to Toothless but he was silent; I guessed that my gift had its limits. I thought of Merida often. I could her vividly. Her eyes, her red hair, her beautiful body, everything. I tried to imagine what she was doing right now, maybe trying to convince her father to let us go or maybe William was beating her into submission. I gritted my teeth. If I ever see him again, I'll kill him for everything he's done to me, to Merida, to Jack and Rapunzel. I will make him pay.

The jangle of keys and the click of the lock caught all of our attentions. We all looked at the door as it opened and two guards came walking in. They said nothing and instantly walked to North, roughly grabbing his arms and putting them in chains. They pushed him out the door and left without another word. The door slammed shut loudly.

"Where do you think they took him?" Rapunzel asked quietly. I shrugged my shoulders,

"I don't know." I replied with the awful feeling of dread in my stomach. I prayed that North would be alright, that he was not going where I thought he was.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

The guards walked North down the hall, one in front of the bandit and the other behind him. He knew it was pointless to resist so he walked calmly with them. As they continued their walk, he looked at the doors he passed, sometimes able to see a prisoner. Many were men;

rough brutes that had the faint spots of blood in their stubbles. They passed another door and North stopped in his tracks when he saw a young girl in the window. She couldn't have been older than 17. The girl looked at North and all he saw was emptiness in her eyes.

The guard pushed his shoulder,

"Keep moving!" He ordered. North spared one last glance at the girl before continuing to walk, wondering what she had done to land in a place like this.

As they progressed, the guards seemed to get more frustrated and irritable with North and began to drag him to their destination. They finally reached another door. The guard standing there smiled and opened it. North just barely caught a good look of the room before the guards pushed him down in front of a pole and tied his hands around it. The Cossack felt a terrified when he realized he was in the torture chamber.

He heard some men whispering behind him but every time he tried to look, a guard would hit him. Minutes passed and nothing happened. Feeling the need to annoy them, he said,

"Can we please get this over with?" The whispering stopped and North chuckled lightly at his own joke. He heard the click of boots approaching him and someone bowing down next to him.

"Impatient, are we?" Cinãjed sneered. He looked up to the guards and nodded. One grabbed a knife and cut open North's shirt, letting the fabric dangle on his arms. Cinãjed stood up and noticed the large, ugly red scar that ran across North's entire back, "Had a run with the law before, bandit?"

North didn't answer,

"That wasn't the law." He muttered under his breath, tears forming in his eyes at the painful memory of that scar. It clouded his mind so much that he didn't hear the crack of the whip until it lashed at his back, searing pain rampaging in him with a painful sting to finish it. North bit his lip and breathed heavily in order to suppress the pain.

"You've stolen from us for many years." Cinãjed spoke. He leaned down beside the bandit and pulled on his hair until they face each other, "Where is the money?" North stared at him and slowly shook his head,

"Go fuck yourself." He whispered and pulled himself out of Cinãjed's grip, realizing it would only get worse from here. Cinãjed paced away, fuming. He spoke to the man holding the whip and whispered,

"I think 50 should do it."

The man chuckled darkly and lifted the whip to deliver another blow.

North bit his lip so hard that it began to bleed. He refused to scream; he refused to appear weak and vulnerable. Each lash hurt more than the other and the sting became more and more powerful.

1... 2... 3...4...

He counted the lashes, trying to escape his pain with happy memories.

5... 6... 7... 8...

He saw Petrov, the day he got him; when he won his first fight; the day he found Flynn.

9... 10... 11... 12...

Then he saw her. His wife. Her black hair, her caramel colored skin, her large green eyes, her beautiful full lips. He saw the red bindi on her forehead, the blue trim of her white choli and lehenga.

13... 14... 15... 16...

He heard her laugh, her sweet nightingale voice as she spoke, her smile.

17... 18... 19... 20...

He saw another smile. One as sweet as his wife's but with a hint of mischief. His daughter's smile. He heard her little voice say "_ya tebya lyublyu, papa_" and he heard her giggle and saw her blue eyes shining.

21... 22... 23...24... 25!

North screamed, not only from the lashes but from the pain in his heart.

"_Nicholas!_" He heard his wife scream. North looked around frantically, the memories of that night washing over him,

26... 27... 28... 29...

He remembered their little house on the outskirts of the village. He remembered the horror of finding it empty, all the furniture thrown over the floor and items scattered and smashed everywhere. He remembered hearing the crying of his daughter from the hiding place underneath the floor. He remembered pulling his terrified girl out of the hole and comforting her.

30...31... 32... 33...

He remembered her saying that the villagers had come and taken her mother away and that her mother had hidden her. He remembered telling her to stay hidden and her putting a small gold bracelet in his hand, saying it would protect him. He remembered giving her a kiss and going to the village.

34... 35... 36... 37...

He remembered seeing the villagers standing in a circle around the town centre, some holding torches and the monks saying prayers in Latin. He remembered the horror scene of his wife chained to a post with her choli ripped from the whip. Remembered her blood staining

the pure white fabric; remembered the devil holding the whip with the darkest smile on his ugly face.

38... 39... 40... 41...

He remembered running to her, throwing himself onto her and the stinging pain of the whip as it slashed across his back. Remembered being pulled away and watching the devil lift his whip again. Remembered running to her again and the pain of the whip as it slashed against his arm.

42...

Remember the sound of the rattling chains as they untied his wife. Felt her tears seep into his shoulder as the voice of the devil instilled fear in the villagers to the "devil spawn", to his daughter.

43...

Remember the sword pointed at his heart and the devil demanding to know where his daughter was; remembered saying no.

44...

Remembered the devil lifting the sword to impale him. Remembered the villager running into the square with his daughter.

45...

Remembered the devil walking to her.

46...

Remembered the arms holding him and his wife back as the devil lifted the sword to the little girl.

47...

Remembered his wife breaking free, running to her and embracing her.

48...

Remembered the sword running through her heart.

49...

Remembered the devil lifting the sword again. Remembered the final scream of his daughter.

50!

North yelled a yell so loud and so full of agony that it could be heard at the gates of DunBroch. He panted loudly, tears running out of his red eyes, the pain in his back as unbearable as the pain in his heart. He heard the clicks of boots returning to the spot beside him but he paid no heed when the man began questioning him again. It

didn't matter anyway; he would die anyway, either here at their hand or on the gallows. He didn't fear death. He never had. Ever since that terrible night, he wished he could die.

The man left North's side, obviously dissatisfied by the bandit's silence. North knew that there was a new order to whip him some more. As the whip was lifted, North uttered a name. A name he hadn't said in years. With the smile of his wife in his mind, he whispered,

"_Paro._"

* * *

><p>Jack's POV

Another long hour had passed but North still hadn't returned. I was worried beyond wit's measure. North held invaluable information about Aileen. If he betrays itâ€¦|

I shook my head, knowing that North wouldn't break no matter what was thrown at him. I had encountered him several times before this affair. He was not one to betray something he put his heart to.

I took hold of Rapunzel's hand, stopping the fiddling she was doing. She sighed and readjusted her position,

"I'm worried." She whispered. I placed a small kiss on her forehead.

"Me too." I replied. The silence ensued once more but it didn't last long as we heard the familiar click of the door. I stood up, ready to face any guards, but only North entered, collapsing to his knees. All three of us ran to him as the door shut.

"North?" Rapunzel asked as she knelt in front of him, placing a hand on his shoulder. He hissed loudly and she withdrew her hand, noticing the red sticky liquid on her hand. She looked at his back and let out a strangled scream.

I looked and just barely prevented myself from retching the contents of my stomach at the sight of his back. There were no less than 70 wounds of the whip endlessly oozing blood; there was no spot on his back that wasn't covered with the red liquid.

Hendry walked away and retched into the corner, the sound making me more sick.

"Rapunzel." North said weakly and numbly. She looked at the man's face, nearly weeping at the sight of how broken he looked. She tried to give a smile as she wiped away the tears with the hem of her dress, "You can use my coat to stop the bleeding."

Rapunzel nodded and retrieved the coat from the corner. She was about to rip it into long strands when North reached for it and took out a item, a small bracelet made of gold. As Rapunzel continued to rip, North pressed a kiss to it,

"North," Rapunzel said quietly as she ripped another long strand, "Did you tell them anything?" She lay the strip of cloth on a cut.

North hissed loudly and started sobbing. He leant his head to the floor, pulling on his hair,

"Heather, forgive me." He sobbed. Rapunzel looked at me, the worry and fear etched on her face. He had told them about Heather.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Heather Williamson blinked away a tear as she straightened out the sheets on the bed, reflecting on how empty it would be from now on. Heather's mother had passed on into the next life and now, Heather felt more alone than ever. With Mavis and her mother gone, Heather had no one. Well, she had Fionntan but the man was so shy that Heather could never read his feelings. She could never tell if he saw her as a friend or, perhaps, something more.

She sighed, grabbing the white dusting cloth to start her routine of cleaning her house. When she stepped outside to clean the now gray rag, she spotted the group of guards leaving the castle. As any normal person, she thought they would head in her direction. She dismissed the thought though when they took the route to the Transylvanian Inn.

Heather continued her chores peacefully. She took a bucket and went to the well at the end of her street. She filled it with the cold water and returned home. But she was just at the door when she heard a scream.

When she turned, she saw the guards had entered the street and one guard, possibly the leader, had grabbed a woman by her hair and pulled on it roughly. The poor woman screamed in pain.

"Where is she!?" The guard yelled at her, yanking on her hair again. The woman let out another cry and pointed down the street, at Heather.

Heather dropped the bucket and ran into her home, slamming the door shut and locking it. With minimal difficulty, she pushed the small closet in front of the door; not a moment too soon. The instance the furniture barricaded the door, loud banging on the door started.

"Heather Williamson! Open this door in the name of the King!" The leader yelled but Heather had no intention of complying. She ran to the bed and pulled a sack from below it. In it were supplies and any item that would betray Heather's treason. She threw her cloak around her and fell to the floor, starting to feel the rough stone. As the banging grew louder, Heather pulled a stone up to reveal a hidden passage. She slid herself into the black hole and pushed the stone back as fast as she could.

The stone had slid into its place when several guards entered the home through the windows.

Heather sat silently in absolute terror as she listened to the guards moving the closet away from the door. She flinched when the leader yelled in frustration at her "disappearance". She didn't move until she heard footsteps over her. With a gasp, she began running down the

tunnel. She knew that the tunnel had no turns so she wasn't scared of running into a wall.

She let out a sigh of relief when the exit came in sight, a hole beaming in light on the ceiling. Using the walls and any roots, Heather climbed, somewhat ungracefully, out of the tunnel, pushing aside the thin blanket of sewn together leaves.

Quickly replacing the blanket, she ran from the tunnel and the tree that hid it and ran towards the hideout. All the occupants were surprised to see Heather, especially in her haggard appearance.

She explained to them what happened. When Heather finished her tale, Aileen confided that North and Flynn never showed up for their rendezvous last night. North had the money Aileen needed for another escape.

Heather's attempted arrest... North's and Flynn's disappearance... It couldn't have been coincidence. Aileen realized that the mission had been compromised. They were all in danger.

****_**Ya tebya lyublyu, papa**_**" means "I love you, papa" in Russian. I just had to have North's daughter say something cute. I'm not going to tell her name (it'll be revealed later) and I'm not a 100% about her age but I'm guessing she's not older than 6. *wipes away tear* If any of you want a visual of Paro, there's a picture of her on my DA page.**

Guys I thought of a little "game". If I reach 600 reviews on this story, I'm going to write an alternate ending. Now, I'm going to do this based on popular vote. When the story is drawing closer to its end, I'll put all the scenarios in a poll and let you decide. The one with the most votes wins. The poll closes when I post the final chapter. PS: there are approximately 11 chapters left.

Review, favourite, follow

34. Peace

I cried in this chapter. I really did

Also don't expect an update this week because my school's production of **_Fame **_**starts and I'm in it.**

There are some other languages spoken in here but I put translations beside the sentences.

WARNINGS: Character death, and maybe some feels, I don't know

Chapter 32: Peace

Rapunzel's POV

Without bandages or anything to clean the injuries, there was little I could do to treat North. The only means of healing or escape was sleep. He was lying on a makeshift bed on his stomach with a pillow made of my cloak. He had been asleep for a long time. He had slept through the day and into night, his breathing heavy and shallow all

at once. Throughout his slumber, he had held tight to the gold bracelet. As I sat vigil by his side, I wondered why it was so important to him. It couldn't have been from a mere lust and love for gold; I had never thought him to be such a man. It had to be something else.

North groaned in his sleep and wearily opened his eyes. I shuffled closer to him, taking a stray hair out of his face.

"How are you feeling?" I whispered, not wanting to wake Jack and Hendry on the other side of the cell. North sighed wearily and shifted a little.

"It doesn't hurt as much anymore." He said weakly, closing his eyes and coughing a little. I checked his back. The bleeding had stopped a long time ago but I had kept the fabric on them in hope I could prevent them from getting infected. The hand with the bracelet moved slightly, sparking my curiosity again. But it never came to light as North spoke, "Rapunzel, listen carefully," He placed his hand over mine and looked me in the eye; the sun was slowly peeking through window, "I told them about Heather but not in the way you think. I told them Heather _is _Aileen." I gasped lightly at his confession,

"You what?" I asked dumbstruck.

"I convinced them that Heather was their nuisance." He closed his eyes, a tear running down his cheek,

"But they'll execute you."

"They would've done that even if I didn't tell them." He looked at the door, "I can imagine them deciding right now how they're going to end me." He gave my hand a light squeeze, "Rapunzel, if they question you and your involvement is uncovered, you must say that Heather is Aileen."

"But Heather-"

"She escaped. I know she did. I wouldn't have said her name if she didn't stand a chance of escape." He let go of my hand and closed his eyes and started talking again, to himself or me, I didn't know, "They'll put me in a different cell and tell my fate there. You'll seeâ€| you'll see." The next hour was silent. I continued my vigil as Jack and Hendry woke up to start another day of boredom. It must've been around 8 in the morning when the guards returned. As usual, they said nothing and moved to grab North. They pushed me aside and kicked him awake. As one lifted him up, the other guard ripped the fabric off of North's came, causing him to cry out. I tried to fight back at the guards but they easily pushed me off, throwing me to the hard floor.

I got up as they pulled him out the door and I saw North looking at me. He looked scared. I ran to the door, thinking I could slip out but it slammed shut. I hit the door and slid down the harsh wood and began to cry lightly for North

Little did I know that that was the last time I ever saw him.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

North sat quietly staring at his hands, trying to lessen the boredom and loneliness. He had been moved to his own cell. It was smaller than the previous one but cleaner with a slab of wood that remotely resembled a bed. There was a single barred window that looked out into the village center, where something was being built.

He sighed and ran a hand through his hair, finally coming to terms with the news he had just heard.

He had had no company since the guards left, except for an elderly priest how had come to tell him his fate.

He was going to be executed the next morning by the hangman's noose.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

The gallows stood lonely in the village center. As the last parts were added and fixed onto it, people slowly began to gather around it. The elderly to obnoxious little boys were ecstatic to see the execution of the notorious bandit. As the crowd slowly grew larger, two figures appeared from a lonely alleyway.

One was a grown woman. She wore a simple white choli and lehenga and a sari trimmed in bold red over it. Covering her neatly done bun was a white dupatta, also trimmed in bold red. She wore no jewelry, except for the small maang tikka on her forehead. Her henna decorated hand held tight to the hand of a young girl, who was no older than 6. She wore a purple Langa Voni with a thin gold trim and two small bangles on her wrists. While no one had ever seen these two figures before, they were completely ignored by any by-passers

Still a distance away, they stopped. The woman placed the girl in front of her and placed her elegant hands upon the child's shoulders

"_Jaham pita hai? _(Where is father?)" The child asked as she looked up at the woman. The woman looked down at the child with her green eyes,

"_Vaha jaldi hi yaham ho ja'ega.__(He'll be here soon)" The woman replied, turning a longing gaze at the castle, seeking the barred window that caged the one her eyes yearned to see, "_Bahuta jalda_. (Very soon)" The woman closed her eyes and began to sing, still ignored by the growing crowds. She had a beautiful voice but it was one filled with yearning and sorrow.

Nikolasa suno na (Nicholas, please listen)

_Tum bin paoon kaise chaiyn _(How can I be in peace without you?)

_Tarsoo tumhiko din raiyn _(I yearn for you the entire day and night)

Chhod ke apne Kaashi-Mathura (Please leave your Kaashi and Mathura)

_Aake baso more nain _ (And dwell in my eyes)

_Tum bin paoon kaise chaiyn _ (How can I be in peace without you?)

_Nikolasa tarsoo tumhiko din raiyn _ (Nicholas, I yearn for you the entire day and night)

_Ik pal ujiaara aaye _ (One moment it's life is full of life)

_Ik pal andhyaara chhaye _ (The next very moment it's dark)

_Mann kyun na ghabraaye _ (Why should I be frightened?)

_Kaise na ghabraaye _ (Why should I be frightened?)

_Mann jo koi doraaha apni rahon mein paaye _ (If my heart is confused in front of a crossroad)

_Kaun dishaa jaaye _ (Which path to take)

_Tum bin kaun samjhaaye _ (Who else but you can guide?)

_Tum bin kaun samjhaaye _ (Who else but you can guide?)

She continued to sing, her voice carried by a soft breeze towards the castle. As it reached the castle, no one could hear the magical voice it carried. No one except North. He walked to the window and grabbed the bars when he heard the sound wafting in. He looked out, barely noticing the gallows, and scanned the crowd for the one who was singing. He squinted his eyes when he saw the two mysterious figures dressed in white standing by the gallows but he looked away when the door opened behind him. There stood three guards, one holding chains and another a clean white shirt.

"Put this on!" The guard ordered as he threw the shirt to North. He clumsily caught it. He looked out the window but the two figures were gone. When he had put it on, the other guard came and put the chains on his wrists, the metal digging into his skin.

They pushed him down the halls of the dungeons and out into the village center. He cringed at the sudden brightness and the loudness of the crowd. They roared as he appeared, shouting insults at him and throwing food at him. With a smug smile of pride, the guards grabbed the bandit by his arms and began to drag him towards the gallows. North looked frantically around the crowd until he spotted the two figures again. He stared at them, trying to see the faces that seemed so familiar under the white veils.

The sudden shove of the guards distracted him. He found himself staring at the stairs that led up to the noose. He looked up at the rope, just dangling there. He slowly walked up the stairs, the guard that waited for him pulling him along and placing him upon the trapdoor. The hangman put the noose around his neck and pulled it a little too tight. North gasped lightly but the hangman just chuckled.

A judge silenced the crowd and began to read the charges against him. Most of them were lies. Murder, theft, arson, rape, treason—Lies. North looked around the crowd and saw the lifted platform on which his persecutors stood. William, Cin—ed and all the other puppets were standing there to watch him die. He looked out to the crowd, one last time, to try to find the two figures but he couldn't find them; it was like they disappeared into thin air.

As he looked down at the bracelet in his palm, the crowd began to chant. They wanted to see him dead. North turned his gaze back to the nobles and smiled. He would have his fun with them one last time.

"You want the money?" He yelled, "You can have it! I left everything I gathered together in one place. Now you'll just have to find it!" The nobles' eyes widened and the crowd began to grow restless at the knowledge of vast wealth to be found. North smiled at the sight and was so distracted he didn't hear the lever. The last thing he comprehends is the floor disappearing beneath him and then—nothing.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

North woke up to the calm sound of birds and the gentle touch of a light breeze through his hair. The grass underneath him tickled and poked at his exposed arms, making the Cossack sit up. He was in the middle of a large field, overlooking pine forests in all directions. The sky was filled in its entirety with pink clouds but no sun, despite it being bright in the meadow. He looked up when two songbirds flew overhead and hovered in front of him in order to play with each other. He chuckled as they flew away into the distance, still singing brightly.

The giggle of a child distracted him.

He looked to the edge of the forest and spotted a little girl with tanned skin running around the meadow and leaning down to collect flowers. He stood up, thinking and praying with all his heart it was who he thought she was. The girl looked up and stared at him for a moment before dropping the flowers and running to him,

"Papa!" She screamed. With tears in his eyes, North started running too. Once down the hill, he collapsed to his knees, his legs feeling weak from the overwhelming emotion. He spread his arms out wide and his daughter ran into them. He embraced her tightly, tears of joy seeping into her sattai. He let out another sob at the realization that this was real. His daughter was in his arms.

"_Moya doch'_ (my daughter)" He whispered. He let go of her in order to get a good look at her. She was the same as he remembered. She was every bit her mother; same face, same nose, same hair, same eye shape but she had his blue eyes.

"Papa, why are you crying?" She asked as her little hands wiped away his tears. North chuckled and cupped her little face in his very large hands,

"Because I'm so happy." He smiled and she smiled back, throwing her

arms around his neck again,

"I missed you so much." She whispered. North placed a kiss by her temple,

"I missed you too."

"Nicholas?" A familiar voice said quietly. North looked up and froze at what he saw. There, at the edge of the forest, stood his wife, as beautiful, as graceful, as elegant as he remembered her. She stared at him with her large green eyes, her hand holding tight to the bold red trim of her dupatta the way she always did. Both adults stood still, just staring at each other

"Paro!" He called out as he began to run, his tears of joy coming again. He saw her begin to cry too and moving faster at him, her dupatta falling from her head onto the grass. North began to run faster; this wasn't another nightmare where he could never reach her, this wasn't another nightmare where he heard her cries and he could never comfort her. He would reach his wife.

Paro slowed down her run and opened her mouth to say something but couldn't as North smashed his lips onto hers, pouring all the love, longing and desire into it. She wrapped her arms around his broad shoulders, her graceful hand running through his luscious brown locks. She took a gasp of breath as he pulled her closer, tasting his tears on her lips.

North gasped lightly as he pulled away from the kiss, leaning his forehead against hers, reminding himself again that this was real. He felt his wife's warm hands wrap around his wrists,

"I waited a long time for this." She whispered. North chuckled lightly from joy. He looked at her and caught sight of her red bindi, the dot placing a seed of doubt,

"You shouldn't be here." He whispered, "The _samsara_..." Paro placed her fingers over his lips,

"I begged Krishna to stop mine." She replied, placing her hands on his cheeks, wiping away the remnants of tears, "I couldn't let you come to nothing and I couldn't leave our daughter alone." Paro looked at the little girl, sitting in the grass and smiling brightly. Paro held out her hand to her daughter and the little girl ran to it but didn't take it. She looked to her mother then to her father and held her hands up to the male. North laughed and picked his daughter up, giving her a kiss on her cheek. Paro had recovered her lost dupatta, the long fabric neatly folded in her hands. She smiled and clasped her husband's free hand. With a gentle pull, she began to lead her family to the place where they could spend the rest of eternity in peace.

I love Paro and North together so much. One of my OTPs. I posted Paro's outfit on my DA account, so please check that out.

**Soâ€¦ muchâ€¦ researchâ€¦ The Indian culture is very complex. Took me a while to understand what each piece of clothing was called. You can find all of them on Wikipedia, if any of you want to know what they look like. **

****You should know that I don't speak Hindi or Russian and that I used Google Translate to find the speaking bits, so feel free to correct me. The song that was sung was ****_**Man Mohana**_** from Bollywood's ****_**Jodhaa Akbar ****_** (very beautiful movie)****_**.****_** I did change the text slightly because in the original text, she's singing to Krishna. I didn't really understand the ****_**Kaashi-Mathura****_** part so I just left it in there.**************

****Review, favorite, follow.****

35. A Light in the Dark

****Hey everyone, I'm back with another chapter! Sorry I was gone so long but I decided to take a break because I wanted to write some stuff with other couples and other concepts (hence ****_**Nature's Wonder****_****) but I'm back in the game. Originally, I was going to post this on Sunday (because it's my birthday on that day) but I decided to not leave you guys hanging. Also, I replied to comments in the AN at the bottom.******

****Boy, this chapter is probably one of the heaviest in the story so far. Why? Read and find out.****

****WARNINGS: Blood, violence, language, and rape****

****Chapter 33: A Light in the Dark****

Third Person POV

A mysterious figure clad in a black cloak slowly rode to DunBroch upon a black horse. Underneath the black hood, the figure smirked at his sudden change of fortune. He was supposed to be stuck in MacInroy Castle until his Lord wedded the Princess but, for reasons unclear, he was pardoned of his wrong-doings and invited to return to the castle.

As the figure approached the gates, the guards were closing them for the night. However, when they spotted the figure, their eyes widened and they quickly reopened the heavy doors, bowing as the figure passed them.

He continued his slow, menacing pace until he reached the stables of the castle. He slid off his black steed and handed the reins to the stable boy. The figure looked up at the castle and smiled.

Briskly, he walked into the castle to his destination. It didn't take long for him to find it, seeing that he had been there many times. Without hesitation, he knocked on the oak door, entering when he heard permission from within.

William MacInroy stood with his back to the door, staring into the fireplace with his hands behind his back. Only when he heard the door shutting behind him did he turn around, smiling at the familiar face.

"It's good to see you again, my friend." He said with a smile as the figure removed the hood and bowed.

"My Lord," He said, "I didn't believe I'd be back so soon. Her

Majesty, the Princess, can hold quite a grudge."

"She can but you needn't worry about that. It's all taken care of." The figure smiled.

"Did the scum really try to kidnap her?" He asked, sitting down in a nearby chair. William sat down in a nearby chair.

"We're not sure," He lied, "But the Princess' mind is hell-bent on proving that they didn't. Ever since the scum came here, she been trying to convince the King and Queen that they are innocent and trying to have they released. Of course, she's failed." William said with an evil smirk. The figure smirked too, lewd thoughts of a particular someone among the scum coming to mind. The thoughts reluctantly stopped when William spoke again,

"I have a task for you and it must be completely tonight." The figure unintentionally smiled. He stood up and looked at the Lord intently. William stood up and looked him straight in the eye, "The scum's trails start tomorrow," He explained, "And I want you to ensure that they are so broken, they'll say nothing to defend themselves."

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

North's death had delivered a hard blow to the ones that had once shared a cell with him. The hours of boredom had increased and the fear tenfold. The stench of death was more potent and the screams of distant torture seemed louder.

The three prisoner had resigned themselves to spent their hours in silence. They spared each other the occasional glance but little was said. Anything that was brought into the cell was ignored too.

Hiccup had kept his spot by the window. He spent his hours staring at the sky, either praying or trying to hear his dragon, who was as silent as the cell/ He avoided looking at Jack and Rapunzel because every time he did, he was faced with the overwhelming feeling that this was all his fault.

If he hadn't asked them to help him and Merida elope, then they wouldn't have been stuck in here. Then North and Flynn would've been alive. Then he would've been able to see Merida.

Simply the thought of her gave Hiccup a boost of hope. The loud-mouthed, gossiping guards had seemed more than willing to share the fast spread whispers of the castle. They told him that the princess was relentlessly trying to convince the King and Queen of their innocence.

"I love you, Merida." He whispered to the full moon, hoping that the princess was looking at it too. Staring at the bright sphere gave Hiccup an odd sense of serenity. That sense was short-lived.

He tore his gaze away from the window when he heard running outside the door. Some men were yelling too.

The lock clicked and the door swung open. The sudden brightness

blinded Hiccup and thus, he was unable to see the two bulky MacInroy goons enter. The larger one of the two headed for the blacksmith, delivering a painful blow to his stomach.

Hiccup had no time to yell or even regain the lost air before the goon clutched his throat. He began clawing at the goon's hands as they wrapped tighter around his throat, trying to loosen their grip but even with the strength acquired in years of blacksmithing, he could not budge the hands.

The goon smiled devilishly as the blacksmith slowly turned paler from the lack of air. He chuckled when he let out a strangled gasp and his eyes began to roll to the back of his head. Suddenly, the goon released him and let the man fall the hard floor.

Hiccup managed one gasp and one cough before being kicked in the stomach again. HE was lifted by his tunic. Through his blurry vision, he could see the goon briefly before it all turned black. This blackness, however, would save him from the horrors that would transpire.

The second goon, the smaller one, had gone after Jack. He had slapped Rapunzel away and had lifted Jack as if he were a mere ragdoll. The goon smashed Jack against the wall, earning a groan of pain.

IN the meantime, Rapunzel had recovered from the assault. She caught sight of Hiccup lying unconscious on the other side of the cell before a grunt of pain turned her sight to Jack. She watched in horror as the goon attacked Jack.

"Keep your hands off of him!" She screamed as she kicked the goon behind the knee. The man screamed in pain and swung his hand around to backhand Rapunzel's cheek. The sheer force of the slap was enough for Rapunzel to tumble to the floor.

"Kentigern!" The goon screeched as he continued his assault of Jack, "Take care of this bitch!"

The larger goon- Kentigern- smiled lewdly at Rapunzel, noting that the hem of her dress had gone up to a normally inappropriate height, showing her beautiful, bare leg.

"Wait." A voice said from the outside. Kentigern stood still and politely bowed his head to the figure in the doorway.

Rapunzel looked to the door and gasped in horror when the figure stepped into the cell and she could see his face.

It was Artair.

Rapunzel quickly moved to cover her legs, lest she tempt him, but the hem had barely reached her ankles when Artair roughly grabbed her wrist.

"No." He whispered lewdly, moving the dress back up, "It's better up here." He moved his hand to caress her leg but she slapped it away.

"No." She said firmly, though she had a slight quiver in her voice. Artair huffed lightly, cupping her cheek gently. He smirked.

"Still as feisty as ever." He whispered. Before Rapunzel could do anything, Artair smashed his lips against hers. Rapunzel tried with all her might to push him off but he was much stronger than her. He became more forceful with his kiss, pushing her down onto the floor.

Rapunzel began to panic. With her free hand, she frantically searched on the floor for something- anything to fight back with. Luck was on her side when her fingers felt a piece of wood, a remnant of the stool North had destroyed.

Artair stopped his kiss and stared down at her. That's when Rapunzel struck. With a yell, she slammed the piece of wood against the left side of Artair's face.

With an agonizing scream of pain, he rolled off her, clutching his face.

"Fucking whore!" He screamed. He removed his hand and stared at Rapunzel. Her attack with the wood had caused a large, deep gash from his eyebrow to his ear. The worst, however, was his eye. The lid was closed and swelling, the skin bulging red. Fury seething, Artair forcefully placed himself in between her legs, roughly keeping her hands above her head. He leaned down, relishing the sound of her panting in fear.

"You're going to regret that, you little cunt." He whispered into her ear. He growled and attacked her neck, biting down hard on the delicate pink flesh until he tasted blood. He smiled when he heard her whimper and bit down on another spot just as hard. After he finished with that spot, he stared down at her chest, seeing the outline of her breasts. He felt himself harden at the mere thought of them. He wanted to see them so badly.

He let go of her wrists but, the instant he did, she attacked, trying to push him off. She slapped him anywhere she could as he tried to get control of her hands again but failed. In his peripheral, he caught sight of Jack, battered and bruised and being forced to watch Artair having his way with his wife. Artair grabbed Rapunzel's throat.

"Lie still or your husband dies." He threatened. He smiled when her eyes widened in shock. Slowly she lowered her hands back to the ground and lay perfectly still. Artair smirked at his victory. He turned his gaze to the goon holding Jack, "Cut his wrist, Moray. Kentigern, guard the door."

Both goons smiled and obeyed their orders. Moray pulled forth his dagger and swiftly cut into Jack's wrist. The cut was deep enough to bleed but not deep enough for the man to bleed to death. Jack, however, barely reacted to the cut. His eyes were fixated on his wife. His beautiful wife being molested by a evil claiming to be a man. He felt a potent rage bubble in him as he watched Artair rip her dress and attack her body. When Rapunzel cried out as Artair forcefully shoved himself into her, Jack struggled against Moray's tight grip.

"No! Stop!" He begged, a tear rolling down his cheek as Rapunzel looked at him and all he saw were empty, hollow orbs.

Rapunzel felt absolutely empty as Artair had his way with her. No more struggling, no more fighting. Just lying there with the occasional tear coming out of her empty eye. She only cried out loud when Artair forcefully shoved into her. It hurt so much but she said and did nothing. She was oblivious to the fact that Artair was leaning closer to her until he spoke.

"You're lucky, bitch." He whispered, grunting as he shoved into her again, "I'm a much better man than you deserve."

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Artair and the goons left the cell laughing heartily. As they made their way to the exit of the dungeon, a guard took notice and moved to lock the door on the cell they had just left. That is, until he caught sight of the people within.

He saw one of the males unconscious in the corner, dark bruises forming around his throat. The other male, whose arm was covered entirely in red, tried to help and comfort the woman, who stared absentmindedly in front of her with her empty eyes. She tried to cover herself with her ripped dress but the fabric was so badly torn she could cover herself only a little.

Watching them, the guard only felt pity. He had seen many criminals in his time but never had he seen anything like this. He locked the door and barked at another guard to take his position until he got back. For an hour, the guard walked around the castle. First to the kitchens, then the servant's quarters, and lastly, the house of the physicians.

He headed back to the dungeon with a large white bundle tucked under his arm. He dismissed the other guard and opened the cell door. As he entered, he saw the man with the bloodied arm standing up and glaring at him, as if he expected a fight. The guard held up his hand to show he was unarmed.

The guard said nothing as he handed the bundle to Jack and walked out of the cell, locking the door behind him.

Jack stared down at the bundle in his arms, wondering why the guard had given it to him. Placing it down onto the ground, he undid the ties and gasped with hope when he saw the content.

Gauze, ointments for bruising, fresh bread and water and a new dress. Jack felt like he was going to cry at the mere sight of the items. Even in this world of darkness, hate, and cruelty, there was still kindness, compassion and hope to be found.

Yeahâ€¦|. I don't really have anything to say.

Review, favorite, follow.

Replies

KittenFluffz: I don't really get that reference. Care to explain?

****Nelsh:** I'm trying really hard to fit Merida into this somehow but I just can't find the right moments. I hope the descriptions in this chapter were good enough.******

****To everyone that cried during the last chapter:** I cried while writing it because I thought it was just so beautiful and heartwarming******

36. The Trials

****I** finally had some free time to write. I had been working a lot the last little bit and with little inspiration, I got very little writing done. But here's a new chapter.******

****In** this chapter Hiccup (putting it bluntly) is a complete idiot. This chapter also includes a big MAJOR reveal. I had one part near the end completely written out months ago and I turn out deleting it all because it didn't flow well with this chapter. ******

****WARNINGS:** none. Surprised?******

****Chapter 34: The Trails****

Merida's POV

I paced frantically around my room, trying to rid myself of my nervousness and trying to make myself look presentable. The trials were today and I had decided that I wouldn't sit make and hope William would honor his promise. I had already tried to prevent them from even happening by trying to convince my parents that Jack, Rapunzel, and Hiccup were innocent but they are so deep in William's influence that they didn't even listen.

I knew it wouldn't be easy to convince the court that the accused were innocent because they had been charged with high treason but I had to try.

Jack and Rapunzel's trial was about to begin so I had to hurry if I wanted to intervene, seeing that trials for treason never lasted very long. I just started putting my hair in a quick braid when I heard the door open. I looked and CinÃed peering into my room.

"Your Majesty." He said when he spotted me.

"Yes?" I asked, thinking he was here on William's business. He smiled evilly.

"Good." He said, leaving the room and closing the door. I ran to the door and pulled on the handle but it wouldn't budge. I heard the lock click.

"No!" I screamed when I realized that the door was locked and I was trapped, "Let me out! NOW!" I screamed through the little window in the door. I saw CinÃed's ugly face with a cheeky grin through the window, holding the key out of my reach.

"I'm sorry, my Lady, but my Lord requests you stay in your room." He said smugly, putting the key away. He smiled evilly and walked away

with a loud laugh of victory.

"NO!" I screamed, pounding with my fist on the door. I frantically looked around the room, trying to find something that could maybe budge the door. A broken chair and a twisted fire poker was all that was left of that rampage. I pounded on the door, ignoring the pain, but each hit had less and less drive. Eventually, I sank to the floor, the tears falling out of my eyes.

I couldn't help them. I can't save them.

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

Whether it was the wise thing to do or not, I decided to remain silent during my trial. For me it seemed like the wiser choice. That way I wouldn't say anything stupid and make things worse for myself.

Jack and Rapunzel had gone first. When they came back about 2 hours later, they were very vague on the details. They told me about the main piece of evidence used against them: a fake letter from the King of England asking them to kidnap Merida for him. The jury claimed they had found it in their home. Jack had tried to convince them that it was fake and that he had never associated himself with the English nobility but everything in the letter, including the seal and signature, were so convincing that Jack's words held little meaning to them.

The guards took me to the court room shortly afterwards. The room was large and circular with a high ceiling. There was a small podium in the middle where I was forced to stand, surrounded by guards. Directly in front of me, on a higher platform, was the judge. Beside him were two more figures in black as well as the King and William MacInroy.

His Majesty looked at me in utter disgust while William's smirk was a mix of evil and triumph.

They read out the charge against me: high treason for the attempted kidnapping of Princess Merida. They asked how I pleaded. I said not guilty because what else could I say? They presented false evidence and heard false accounts of witnesses. Throughout it all, I remained silent, even when they asked questions.

About an hour in, I must've started to annoy them because they began yelling at me in order to scare me into submission.

First the main judge, then the other two men in black and then it seemed like the entire room began yelling. I tried to drown them out but the voices became louder than Thor's thunder. I felt anger boil in me but I tried to suppress it. The judges kept yelling at me and I thought I heard one of them yell "traitor!" or something. That was it! All the anger in me burst out in one loud sentence that towered over all the others,

"With Forseti as my judge, I am innocent! You call me a liar but the only liar here is that rat MacInroy!"

Silence. There was complete silence. The only thing I heard was my deep breathing. It was there that I realized what I had said. Not only did I insult William but I also revealed the secret that'll cost me my life.

"Viking!" A man in black yelled, standing up and pointing an accusing finger at me. Then the room burst out in another wave of yells and insults. It lasted for a long time before the main judge's voice towered over everyone's and all fell silent. I could feel the man's eyes on me and I stared at the ground,

"What's your real name, Viking?" He asked, spitting out the last word. I kept quiet, just taking deep breaths. The judge brought his fist hard on the table, "WHAT IS IT?!" he yelled, his voice echoing a thousand times through the room. After a few more seconds of silence, I decided there was no more point in keeping silent. I straightened myself, keeping my head high and stared right at the judge, a small glimmer of fear playing in his face.

"My name is Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third." Another wave of murmurs swam through the room, "Son and heir of Stoick the Vast, Chief of Berk."

"Impossible!" The judge yelled, followed my loud whispers of shock and disbelief. I wasn't surprised at their reaction. I was believed to be dead and I had had the reputation of being small and weak. Not only that but I had worked and lived under the nose of the man who was often perceived to have been able to identify a Viking instantly. I looked up to the King and nearly faltered at his sight of utter betrayal. William, however, seemed to be in heaven.

"My lords," He said overtop of the sound, his voice calm and slimy all at once, "Is there really a point to continue with this trail? This man is a Viking; he just told us so." He looked at the judge then back at me, "And we all know the proper way to deal with such filth."

"And your definition of proper is cutting off someone's head." A voice said behind me. Everyone turned and watched as a figure, clad in a blue cloak, stepped forward from the shadows. William chuckled at the sight of her.

"Well, well, well. If it isn't Aileen Fletcher." He said mockingly. She slowly walked to William with a light chuckle,

"Well, well, well." She said, "If it isn't a complete ass!" She retorted. There were shocked gasps emanating through the room whereas I tried to suppress a laugh at the sight of how furious William looked. He obviously didn't take to the insult well,

"Enough!" William yelled. He snapped his fingers at some guards, "Arrest her!"

The guards slowly approached Aileen, their weapons drawn. Aileen casually walked to them, an almost bored sway to her steps.

A guard charged at her, raising his weapon to attack; it took Aileen only seconds to defeat him.

Whether it was idiotic bravery or the realization that they'd never

be able to defeat on their own, I don't know, but the rest of the guards all charged at her at once. Aileen fought them off with ease, hitting them one at the time and again when they recovered and tried to strike again. Everyone, even the King, watched anxiously as the fight ensued.

A guard was punched in his stomach and he collapsed to the floor. Think he was defeated, Aileen continued her fight with the others. However, the fallen guard got up, his eyes burning with hate as he looked at Aileen. He ran up behind her and grabbed her cloak,

"Aileen!" I called out.

Too late.

The guard gave one powerful tug at the blue fabric and the cloak fell from Aileen, revealing the mystery it had been hiding. The court fell silent at the sight of her. She must've been only slightly shorter than I was with a very skinny build, as if she had once starved and never managed to regain the weight. She had an ugly brand burned on her throat that was easily identified as a V, a common symbol for a Viking that had been captured and sold into slavery. Her light blonde hair was done up in a classic Viking braid, decorated with a leather headband. She wore a deep red shirt with a dark brown skirt that was covered with spikes and emblazoned with grim looking skulls. On her shoulders, she wore metal pads that showed some signs of rust. Her dark blue leggings were ripped on one knee and her fur-lined leather boots seemed to be on the verge of falling apart. On her hip, she wore a two-sided battle axe, the metal casting eerie reflections on the walls.

She panted heavily as she looked around the room and found that everyone was staring at her. When her sight fell upon the guard that held her cloak, she unhooked her axe and put the blade to the man's throat,

"Give that back." She threatened in a low voice. With a shaky nod, the guard held up his shaking hand with the cloak. Aileen snatched it from his hand and quickly put it around her again, not bothering to put up the hood. Her sight fell on me briefly before she turned to William; she looked familiar, too familiar.

"This is not what you expected, huh?" She said to William, who continued to stare at her, never uttering a word, "Aileen Fletcherâ€¦ A Viking." The room continued its unnatural silence.

"What is your real name?" The judge finally asked. She scoffed loudly as started walking around the room.

"What do you care about my real name?" She nearly shouted as she continued her pace, "All that's ever been important to any of you is this phantom I've been for 11 years!" She looked up at the ceiling, raising her arms to the heavens, "I wouldn't share my real name with any of you!" She screamed, the sound echoing a thousand times. "Except," She suddenly said, much softer. She lowered her arms and looked straight at me with her large blue eyes, "Him."

If the court could've gotten more silent it would've. Nobody said anything as Aileen simply stared at me. Most people would've looked

away at her piercing gaze but I kept my eyes glued on her. She seemed so familiar but I couldn't place a name with her face. Aileen chuckled lightly, almost as if she could see my inner turmoil.

"It's been a long time, Hiccup." She spoke in Norse, slowly talking miniature steps towards me, "I wouldn't be surprised if you don't recognize me. I certainly didn't recognize you." I stared at her closely but still I couldn't give her a name. I tried to take a step forward but the guards stopped me.

"Who are you?" She smiled at me and looked back at the judge. She balled her fists and puffed out her chest proudly,

"My name-" She spoke in English, "my real name is Astrid Hofferson!"

****Yes! Aileen Fletcher is the one and only Astrid Hofferson! If any of you (and I think that that was everyone) thought Aileen was Astrid, you were right. Think of Astrid's outfit to be just like her outfit in HTTYD 2 minus the fur hood.****

****Review, favourite, follow.****

37. Lost

****Real quick update. It's shorter than usual because I decided to spilt the original chapter. The title I had in mind for this chapter just didn't fit the context of the chapter.****

****What I meant with Hiccup being an idiot in the previous chapter was that he named a Norse god (Forseti is the Norse God of Justice) and revealed himself. And the reason Astrid says who she is in English: pretty much all the characters in the previous chapter had a moment of idiocy and that was hers and (this has happened to me) when you speak more than one language and you use them on a regular basis, you can accidentally start speaking in the wrong language. Several times have I started speaking Dutch with non-Dutch speaking people around me. And there's also the possibility that Astrid doesn't know how to say it in Norse but that's not likely.****

****For those of you that didn't see the AN I posted: I decided to write an alternate ending regardless of the review amount. There's a poll on my profile where you can choose which ending you like best. The one with the most vote wins. The poll closes when I post the epilogue. ****

****WARNINGS: Character death and feels.****

****Chapter 35: Lost****

Third Person POV

"Astrid?" Hiccup gasped in disbelief. All these long years, he had thought her dead. He had seen her being consumed by flames and yet here she was without even a scar and still the feisty girl he had once known.

He fought against the guards and ran to her, enveloping her in a tight hug.

"I thought you were dead." He whispered into her shoulder. Astrid huffed and hugged him back,

"And everyone thought you were dead, so we're even." Hiccup laughed lightly, a small tear coming out of his eye that he quickly wiped away.

"Astrid Hofferson?" The booming voice of the King spoke. Both Vikings looked up at the hulking man as he stood and stared at the blonde woman with large eyes, "I've heard about your family." He walked down from the high platform and strolled to her, "Rivals with the Jorgensens, amongst the feistiest and the bravest warriors in the Viking Archipelagoes." He reached out and played with a lock of her hair, "A shamed name because of your uncle." Astrid face scrunched up in anger and she slapped the King's hand away, earning a gasp from the judges. She pointed an accusing finger at the King.

"My name is no longer shamed." She hissed, "I redeemed it a long time ago and I didn't need a dragon to do it!" The judge stood up,

"You will show your King some respect!" He seethed. Astrid glared at him,

"He's not my King!" She retorted, "And I most certainly do not have any respect for the man that slaughtered my people for sport!"

The room nearly burst from the uproar. The King snatched Astrid's arm and called for the guards,

"No!" Hiccup screamed as he tried to get to Astrid and free her but some other guards came behind him and restrained him. Little did he know that his cry had triggered a rescue.

By some miracle from the gods, Astrid managed to keep the guards at bay. It went even smoother than her first fight. She easily could've escaped but her reckless head refused to go without Hiccup.

"GO!" Hiccup screamed at her. He realized that if she escaped he wouldn't stand a chance but her importance was far greater than his. Astrid stared at him with uncertainty, often breaking the stare to fight. As soon as her attention was glued back, Hiccup gave her an encouraging nod.

With one swift move, Astrid broke the arm of her current attacker. As the man howled in pain, she made a dash for the shadows, her friend.

"I'll free you, Hiccup! I swear by the Allfather, I will!" She called in Norse as she disappeared from sight. They tried to follow her but it was too late. Astrid was gone.

The whole court room fell silent, though not for long. There was a high pitch in the air. It started small but grew louder and louder. Everything stopped as the pitch sounded as though it was right above them.

BOOM!

Part of the upper wall gave out with a cloud of dust, bricks falling

down on the unfortunate ones below the hole. Coughing at the dust, Hiccup felt the guards being pushed off him and felt the familiar brush of hard scales.

Toothless.

As the dust settled, there were conjoined gasps of fear and amazement at the sight of the fearsome Night Fury. Toothless snarled at anything and anyone that was too close to his friend. He bared his teeth at the guards and put his tail protectively around Hiccup.

Two foolish guards thought they could take on the large dragon and charged at the large beast. Toothless easily kicked aside the two men and quickly assaulted the men man he saw with a raised weapon: the King. Being such a strong and large man, King Fergus actually managed to fight Toothless back but not for long.

The high pitch returned and a plasma blast began forming in the dragon's mouth with the intention of hitting the King.

"No!" Hiccup screamed. Hearing the pleas from his friend and rider, Toothless swallowed the blast. He stared at the human with large eyes as if to say "_me is sorry._"

That was a fatal mistake.

The biggest brutes in the room attacked at once and held the dragon down. Hiccup wanted to run to him and help but the guards held tightly to him. He continued to struggle to get to his friend as William came down from the platform.

With menacing eyes, William stared at the dragon, his hand going around the handle of his sword.

"No!" Hiccup screamed as William drew his sword. He struggled harder against the guards, desperate to get to Toothless, "No! Please! Don't hurt him!" He begged but his pleas fell on deaf ears. William stopped by the dragon's heaving chest and simply looked at the creature in disgust. He lifted his sword,

"Die, you devil!" He whispered and brought the sword down. A loud terrifying screech resounded in the room as William impaled his sword into the dragon's chest, piercing it's heart.

"NO!" Hiccup screamed, tears streaming out of his eyes. He struggled harder against the guards, pulling himself free and running to the body of his friends, still held by the brutes, "Get away from him!" He screeched, kicking at them. The brutes were stumped by the blacksmith's reaction but one by one, they dispersed.

Hiccup collapsed and hugged the still-mockingly-warm body of Toothless. The blood seeping out of the hole in his chest stained the Viking's hands but he made no notice of it as his tears dripped onto the black scales, "Toothless.." He sniffed, pulling tighter at his body. He looked up at stared at William with look that emphasized all his hate, his anger and his grief. He wanted nothing more than to wring William's neck for ruining his life but in his grief, Hiccup couldn't bring himself to do it. He lay his head back on Toothless' scales, "Toothlessâ€¦|" He mumbled as a fresh batch of tears ran out of his eyes.

* * *

<p>Merida's POV

Seconds, minutes, hours, days, years; I had no perception of time as I lay against the door. I hadn't moved since CinÃed locked me here and stole the key.

I had called through the little window until I had almost lost my voice but no one came, let alone notice.

My time was wasted wallowing in regret. It was all my fault. If it wasn't for that damned letter I wrote to my mother, North and Flynn would've been alive. If I written that letter, Jack and Rapunzel would've been free. If I hadn't written that letter, I would've been with Hiccup, in a place where we could be together in peace and without any fear.

I cired and prayed that they would be proven innocent and that everything would return to normal, whatever that was, but part of me was saying that that would never happen.

The footsteps outside and the sound of the key being put back in was the one sound I had been dying to hear all day. Standing up, I stared CinÃed in the eye. The man only gave me a smug look in return.

"The verdict has been reached."He nearly whispered. I leaned closer, hoping that the verdict was that they could go fr- "The sentence has been passed. The scum will die tomorrow."

This chapter is the reason why I didn't want to add Toothless to this story. Also to that guest reviewer who said they'd rather have Toothless dead than see Snotlout and Astrid together. You should be careful what you wish forâ€|

I'm going into hiding now. BYE!

Review, favorite, follow.

38. For the Dancing and the Dreaming

I would've updated earlier but a particular guest reviewer ticked me off a little bit so, I decided to wait. I get it. I left you at a cliffhanger and you wanted an update asap but here's the thing: I had writer's block, I had to work a shit ton, and, this might be a surprise for you, I have a life outside of fanfiction. We had friends and family over that I hadn't seen in years and I wanted to spend time with them! Plus, I went on a camping trip! *takes deeps breath* Ok, I'm done ranting now.

I received the most amazing news! I got accepted into university! Bachelor of Arts, if any of you wanted to know.

Just a reminder: the poll is open until the epilogue. Vote while you can. *If you're a guest reviewer and you want to vote, just leave a review with your choices (you can pick a maximum of two)

****WARNINGS: feels (a lot of them)****

****Chapter 36: For the Dancing and the Dreaming****

Third Person POV

Hiccup sat quietly in a small and lonely cell, looking at the stone floor as occasional tears pattered onto them. His hands were chained behind his back, the metal digging into his wrists, and his good foot was also chained. After his revelation as a Viking, he was treated as badly as every other that had come before him.

They shoved him into a small cell with no window for fresh air or light. They chained him as though he was a wild animal. He was given no food or water and he was completely at the mercy of the guards. He now sported a split lip from where a guard had decided to punch him.

He shuffled slightly, trying to find a more comfortable spot to sit. The chains rang loudly and dug further into his wrists. Immediately, the face of a guard appeared in the small window in the door, inspecting what the Viking was doing. Almost as quickly, he disappeared again when he noticed that nothing had changed.

Hiccup let out a sigh and leaned his head back until it touched the hard wall. Closing his eyes, he thought sourly that this would be the way he would spend the last moment of his life: alone and chained. What a way! What a way!

Minutes passed as he sat alone with his thoughts. He thought of everything and everyone. Berk and the village in the countryside. He thought of his mother, his father, Gobber, Snotlout, the twins, Fishlegs. He supposed he would see all of them soon.

He thought more about his parents, a smile coming to his face. He may have been very young the last time he saw his parents together but the memories were suddenly clear. He could hear his father whistle the beginning of a special song. Hiccup still remembered some of the words to it.

"_I'll swim and sail on savage seas,_" He half-mumbled, half-sang to himself, "_With ne'er a fear of drowning. And gladly ride the waves of life, if you will marry me._" He stopped because he couldn't remember the rest but now, at least, he had a smile on his face.

More time passed. Hiccup guessed it must've been night because a guard, who was kinder than others, brought in a large candle so the he wouldn't sit in the complete dark. As he placed the candle down on the shabby stool, the guard spoke,

"You have a visitor." He said softly.

"Who?" Hiccup asked. He looked to the open door and a figure stood in the frame. Though covered in shadow, Hiccup only needed to see the outline of the figure's hair to know who it was, "Merida." He mumbled in disbelief as the guard stood up and bowed his head respectfully.

"Unchain his hands." The Princess ordered sternly, taking a step into

the cell,

"Your Majesty, are you su-?"

"Just do it!" She snapped at the guard. The guard nodded nervously and knelt down beside Hiccup, fiddling with the keys. He shakily undid the harsh metal chains but, out of fear and the lack of an order, left the Viking's foot chained. He got up to leave but Merida grabbed his arm, "No matter what you hear," She whispered to him, "You will not enter unless I order you to. Understand?" The guard nervously nodded his head,

"Yes, your Majesty." Hearing the answer, Merida released his arm. The guard scurried out of the cell and closed the door behind him.

In the meager light of the candle, Merida looked at the Viking, little tears falling. He looked terrible. Bruises around his throat, his bottom lip covered in dried blood, and his wrists were red from the irritation of the chains. What made it worse was that it was all her fault. The thought sent a wave of emotion through her being, though she tried to suppress it. But one more look at the Viking and she couldn't keep it in.

Letting out a sob, she ran to him and collapsed onto her knees, throwing her arms around him.

"I'm so sorry." She whispered into his neck, a few tears dripping into his shirt.

The surprise of her throwing her arms around him lasted only a moment for Hiccup. Her apology, however, had hit him harder than her sudden action. It hurt him so much to think that she spent all this time blaming herself when he was at fault for all that had happened. He wrapped his arms around her tightly in hope to comfort her.

"It's not your fault, Merida. It's not your fault." He whispered, hoping the words were soothing enough.

Merida shook her head as she sat back up, wiping her eyes.

"No." She choked. She turned her head away, unable to look at him anymore, "I wished we'd never met!" She blurted out, "None of this would've happened!" Part of her wished that were true. She would've been fine in such a reality, knowing that Hiccup and everyone else would've been fine.

Hiccup could hardly believe what he heard Merida say. Yes, he wished things were different but he would never wish her out of his life.

Carefully, he lifted his hands to her and cupped her face. Slowly, he turned it towards him,

"Merida, look at me." She whispered gently, wiping away the tears on her cheeks. She opened her red eyes, another fresh batch of tears threatening to fall. Hiccup gave a small smile, "Meeting you was not a curse. It was more than I could've asked for." He brushed away a few stray curls behind her ear, revealing more of her beautiful face to him, and returned the hand to her cheek, "You made my life worth living."

Merida let out a sound that was a mix of a laugh and a sob. His words buried her earlier wish, though the desire of difference remained strong. She threw her arms around him once more, the smile still there along with the tears.

Hiccup smiled and hugged her back, her hair getting into his face, not that he cared. He was just happy to have been able to see her one last time.

"I don't regret anything." He whispered. He meant, he really did. Their relationship had its ups and downs but it had flourished nonetheless. Even now, they were together after everyone's attempts to separate them. They would be parted soon but he knew he would see her again. Maybe not in this life but he would see her again.

"Me either." She whispered back. She knew that only moments ago she had regretted everything that had happened but she realized that it was merely the situation that had made her say those horrible things. She kissed him tenderly, "I love you." She whispered against his lips before kissing them again. Hiccup smiled with each kiss,

"I love you too"

* * *

><p>Still Third Person POV

Hiccup fell asleep shortly after Merida left. With the darkness and the solitude, sleep was hard to avoid. He didn't want to sleep; it would mean his eventual demise would only come faster but even the mightiest couldn't resist.

When he woke up though, he woke to the smell of distant burning wood and a dark sky, littered with little stars. Confused, he sat up and looked around him. He wasn't in the cell anymore. Instead, he sat in the town center of Berk, completely rebuilt but still completely empty.

Slowly standing up, he spotted the smithy and the light and smoke coming from the building. Taking it as a sign of someone being there, Hiccup ran into the building, only to find it vacant. Confused, he walked out, looking left and right for any other possibilities of life.

A small breeze went by him, carrying the faintest trace of a man singing to him.

No scorching sun, nor freezing cold, will stop me on my journey.

Hiccup recognized it immediately. It was the special song.

As the voice continued to sing, Hiccup strained to hear where it was coming from but it was coming from everywhere.

If you will promise me your heart.

Hiccup started running towards the Great Hall when another voice, a female's, began to sing.

And love me for eternity

My dearest one, my darling dear,

Your mighty words astound me.

The doors to the Great Hall slammed open but Hiccup was greeted by another empty room. As the song continued, he knew there was only one other place it could come from: his home.

But I've no need of mighty deeds

When I feel your arms around me.

He ran around the corner as the man sang again,

But I would bring you rings of gold

And even sing you poetry

And I would keep you from all harm

If you would stay beside me.

Hiccup ran up the hill, the singing getting louder as the woman continued the song,

I have no use for rings of gold

I care not for your poetry

I only want your hand to hold

He was almost at the door,

I only want you near me.

Just as the voices began to sing together, Hiccup threw open the door to the house, stopping instantly in his tracks.

There, before him, were his parents. They were dancing and smiling brightly and almost oblivious to their son in the doorway.

To love, to kiss, to sweetly hold

For the dancing and the dreaming.

Through all life's sorrows and delights

I'll keep your love inside me

_I'll swim and sail on savage seas _

_With ne'er a fear of drowning _

And gladly ride the waves of life

If you will marry me!

Stoick lifted Hiccup's mother into the air, laughing heartily as she held the last note. He twirled her around, slowly putting her back on the ground. They smiled sweetly at each other, staring into each other's eyes with love. Hiccup almost felt the need to cry at the sight; it had been such a long time since he had seen his parents this way, together. It had been 21 years since he had last seen his mother and 11 since he last saw his father. Hiccup took a deep, shuddering breath, trying to suppress the tears.

They must've heard him. His mother turned her head towards him, followed by Stoick. Slowly, she let go of her husband's hands and walked towards Hiccup. She stopped just before him, slowly lifting her hand to cup his face. Feeling his mother's touch, Hiccup let the tears go. He threw his arms around her, his tears seeping into her tunic.

"Mom.." He choked, feeling her wrap her arms around him,

"My sonâ€¦" She whispered, "You've gotten so big." A tear rolled down her cheek as she hugged her son tighter, her hand going through his hair.

"Hiccup?"

Hiccup looked up at the sound of his father's voice. He half expected to see his father with a disappointed scowl because of what he had done in his life. Falling in love with his enemy, befriending another enemy but, much to Hiccup's surprise, Stoick's face was one filled with remorse. Hiccup let go of his mother, staring up at the large, imposing figure of his father. Stoick placed his large hands upon his son's shoulder.

"Hiccupâ€¦ Can you ever forgive me for everything I've done?" Stoick said softly, a slight crack in his voice. Hiccup eyes widened. Never had he seen his father like this. He never showed any emotion to him except anger or disappointment. Never had he ever asked Hiccup for forgiveness. Stoick squeezed his son's shoulders, "I never meant to make you feel unloved or unwanted. I was just trying to protect you." He spoke even softer and painfully looked away from his son.

Stoick felt so much regret. Looking back, all it seemed he ever did to his son was scold and yell at him, never giving him the parental guidance and love that he deserved. He almost jumped when he felt a hand on his massive shoulder.

Hiccup slowly turned his father around,

"Can you forgive me for loving my enemy?" He asked, his voice sounding as broken as Stoick's had only a little while ago. The chief of Berk placed a hand back on Hiccup's shoulder,

"There's nothing to forgive, Hiccup. If you love her, then I shouldn't be standing in your way. Love is a gift, son, and the Gods were gracious enough to give it to you. You should treasure it, not begging forgiveness where it isn't needed." Stoick placed the other hand on the empty shoulder and smiled at his son, who was on the verge of happy tears. Hiccup threw his arms around his father, giving him the first hug ever.

Stoick's eyes widened momentarily before enveloping his son in a warm

hug, a bright smile on his face.

"I forgive you, dad." Hiccup whispered into Stoick's shoulder, "Wait for me on the other side?" The chief let his son out of the hug and looked straight at him.

"The gates are open for you, son." They exchanged smiles once more before Stoick took a step back. Another hand appeared on Hiccup's shoulder as his mother came around to kiss him on his forehead,

"We'll be waiting for you by it." She whispered, joining her husband, who took her hand. They smiled at Hiccup when they began to disappear.

"Wait! Don't go yet!" Hiccup begged, running to the fading silhouettes, "Please!" He reached for them but they disappeared into smoke.

With a yell, Hiccup woke up in his cell. He looked around frantically, searching for his parents but they were gone. He sat for about a minute, catching his breath, before laying back down on the ground. When sleep found him again, he fell asleep with a smile.

****Cuteness everywhere!****

****Review, favorite, follow.****

39. Blood and Tears

****New word record! Previous record: 4901 (including AN). Now it's 5595*** (AN included)****

****This is the chapter I've been dying and dreading to post. This chapter just goes to show how much gut I got (maybe). I'm being honest when I say I was shivering in fear when I posted this...****

****A quick question before the chapter starts. How many of you have noticed that one of the genres of this story is tragedy? For me, the definition of tragedy is the Shakespeare oneâ€|****

****And I guess you could say Hans from Frozen makes an appearance in this but that's personal opinion I guess. I don't like portraying Hans simply as a bad guy; I see him more as a sad character.****

****Reminder: Poll's still open. If you're a guest and want to vote, leave your choices in a review.****

****And there's mention of a weapon named a morning star. In short description, it's a spiked mace.****

****WARNINGS: blood, gore, violence, language, feels, and character death**_**s **_**(note the s)****

****Chapter #37: Blood and Tears****

Jack's POV

How do you spent the last moments of your life? What do you do to lift your mood, to lift your spirit? How do you make the time pass when you're on Death's doorstep? How do you get rid of the fear of death and your eventual demise?

So many questions went through my mind but, I had answers to none of them. Normally, I would crack a joke or play a prank but I've run out of jokes. I could barely conjure a smile. What was there to smile about? All that there was to smile about was that our suffering would end soon but that was such a depressing thought.

All through the night, I had sat next to Rapunzel, trying to coax her to get some sleep. She was terrified to go to sleep because her slumber was always plagued by nightmares. She only was willing to sleep if I sat beside her to protect her. She never told me what the nightmares were about but I suspected it involved Artair because she had been like this since he came to the cell.

Eventually, she got a few hours of sleep. Seeing her in a peaceful lifted my spirits a little. When she was asleep, it was like nothing was wrong at all. She looked like the woman she was. Not the void shell she was now.

She spent most of her time awake staring her ahead of her, her face blank and her eyes void. It was like she was already dead.

I hated seeing her like that.

It was late in the afternoon but nobody had come for us yet. Secretly, I hoped they had forgotten about us but the continuous glances out the window told me otherwise. From the window, I could see the scaffold being built. The only reason for the delay was that the large wooden structure was not done. Even though it wasn't finished yet there were already large crowd by it, all of them waiting for the executions, our executions.

I looked away, instead turning my gaze to the crucifix that hanged on the wall. I knelt before it and prayed.

I prayed for forgiveness, for a swift and painless death, and for mercy. Even though I did break the laws and utterly betrayed my king, I felt no regret for what I'd done. Because of what I did more than 50 Viking were alive and safe. I prayed that they would have a good and bountiful life, filled with happiness and joy.

My prayers ended when the door opened. In the doorway stood one guard holding scissors in his hand. Rapunzel gasped loudly, knowing what it meant. Slowly and with shaking hands, she took her long hair out of the messy bun and let the gold locks spill onto her back.

She started crying as the guard gently took all the hair into his hand and proceeded to cut it off. By the time he was done, Rapunzel's eyes were bold red. Her hair now barely reached past her ears and it was sticking out in all direction.

As the guard walked away with her hair in hand, I crouched down beside her and embraced her. Her tears seeped into my shoulder while I made shushing noises, trying to calm her down,

"It's alright. It's going to be okay." I've never told a bigger lie but what else could I say? I heard footsteps and looked up as a man, who ranked as captain, entered. It was like looking at the devil himself. Bold auburn hair and green eyes that held no emotion and an arrogant smirk.

"Let's get this over with, Overland." He said, his voice dripping with pride. Looking down to Rapunzel, I nodded. I could see guards moving to Rapunzel; these bastards will not touch her!

"No!" I said forcefully. They stopped. Slowly, I pulled Rapunzel to her feet. She clung to me, keeping her head buried in my shoulder as her hand went to mine and clasped it tightly. I squeezed it tightly as I started guiding her to the door.

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV

They came for me in the early evening. They were surprisingly gentle as they removed all of my chains and pulled me to my feet. I half expected them to chain my hands but, they didn't. Instead they held a tight grip on me and there were twice as many guards walking behind me and in front of me. I knew escape was impossible because how would I escape? There was nowhere for me to escape too either, so I resigned myself to walk quietly with the guards, careful to not cause any trouble for them.

Some of the prisoners yelled insults at me as I passed them but I ignored them. They could whatever they liked; I didn't care anymore.

We walked through many tunnels of stone, rarely turning left or right. For me, it seemed an eternity before we reached the door to the outside world. There, waiting by the door, were Jack and Rapunzel.

I gasped when I saw the state of Rapunzel. Her hair barbarically cut off and clinging to Jack like a drowning man to a piece of wood. Small tears rolled down her cheeks as she kept her face buried in Jack's shoulder.

Jack looked to me, his expression filled with sadness but, he nodded at me. I nodded back as the guards pushed him and Rapunzel through the door. As soon they were through, I followed.

The sudden brightness made me cringe and made my eyes hurt. The sounds around me were deafening. Everyone was screaming around me. What they were saying I had no idea but it couldn't be good.

The guards began to push me. I stumbled with each push and sometimes nearly fell but I kept my feet. When my eyes could finally see again, I looked around me.

So many people. It was as if the entire world had gathered to watch the innocent get slaughtered. Men, women, the elderly and the young; everyone was here.

The scaffold was directly in front of me, the block in clear view and

causing a menacing sight.

To the left was a second platform, this one made stone. My blood boiled when I saw William and his puppets but my heart shattered when I saw Merida.

"No!" I whispered as they pulled me up the stairs. Anybody but her, anybody but her. She shouldn't be forced to watch this. Anybody but her.

The chanting priest turned my attention. An aged man in black robes held an open bible in one hand and held a small cross in the other. I had no idea what he was saying as he was chanting in Latin. All I could think as he spoke was,

Wrong religion

Too soon the priest stopped talking. The instant he fell silent, the guards grabbed Rapunzel and tried to tear her away from Jack.

"No!" She cried, holding on tightly to Jack's hand. Jack himself was being pulled the other direction but despite it all, their bond could not be broken. The captain got angry,

"Enough!" He paced to them and drew his sword. He lifted it and cut off Jack's hand! Jack screamed loudly and stumbled back, looking in horror at the bleeding stump. Rapunzel screamed even louder as she dropped Jack's hand onto the floor, all color instantly disappearing from her pink cheeks.

With nothing holding her back, Rapunzel was forced onto the block. The guard kept her down as the executioner aimed at her neck. I could hear her crying and I quickly wrapped my strong arms around Jack, preventing him from interfering and making things worse for her.

"NO! LET ME GO!" He screamed and struggled with a strength I didn't know he had. It shattered my heart hearing him and feeling him struggle but I held on tightly. The executioner lifted his axe. Jack let out another scream and I forced the both of us to look away. The axe swung down and the crowd roared. Rapunzel was gone.

* * *

><p>Jack's POV

If Hiccup hadn't been holding me, I would've collapsed onto the scaffold. She's gone. The woman that made the last 5 years the best years of my life was gone.

Forever.

I couldn't believe it; I didn't want to believe it but it's true. I felt numb with pain and sadness. I wasn't afraid of meeting my death anymore. Instead, I welcomed it.

The guards were moving towards us and they reached for Hiccup. He started to struggle but managed to keep his arms around me but the grip was loosened. I escaped the grip and fell onto my knees in front of the guard,

"Kill me first." I begged. They stared at me as if I was insane; part of me probably was but without Rapunzel, there is no point for me to live. The guards grabbed my arms and dragged me to the block. Much to their surprise and annoyance, I didn't struggle. I quietly went on my knees and placed my head calmly on the block. I didn't flinch when I felt the cold and blood soaked metal of the axe taking aim and I didn't feel a twinge of fear when the axe was lifted,

I'm coming Rapunzel

* * *

><p>Hiccup's POV<p>

For the second time that day, the axe was brought down on the neck of a friend. As the crowd roared and the guards dragged Jack's headless body away, my stomach heaved. Collapsing to the scaffold, I emptied everything in my stomach onto the shiny, new boots of the captain.

"Son of a bitch!" He screamed. He pulled me up by the collar of my tunic and his fist connected with my jaw. I fell back to the wooden floor, a tear falling from the pain while the crowd cheered boisterously.

Rubbing my jaw, I caught sight of William and Merida. He was smiling while she was crying. She stared back at me, moving her lips silently to say: I love you.

So many thoughts went through my mind in a few seconds. Previous weeks and days flashed in my mind as the guards' boots clicked behind me. It seemed only yesterday that I pushed her away. It seemed only yesterday that we consummated our love and that I asked her to run away with me. It seemed only yesterday that we were caught and thrown into this hell.

The guards grabbed my arms and pulled me up, my sight never breaking from Merida.

This was the end.

The end of loving, the end of feeling, the end of breathing, the end of living. This was the end.

Time continued it's slow pace when something stirred in my memory: a promise.

I will fight until the endâ€¦!

This was the end and yet, I was not fighting. When the guards began to pull, I slammed my elbow into the jaw of the guard to my left. He screamed and let my arm go, letting me assault the other guard. He crumpled to the ground after a blow to the stomach. As he fell, I snatched his dagger. I jumped over the railing of the scaffold, landing easily, and ran to my target, ready to strike.

It was easy climbing onto the condemner's platform, tackling William to the ground.

Someone screamed behind me as I lifted the dagger, aiming at William's throat. I could see fear in his eyes as he clawed at me, desperate to stop me. The dagger sailed down but a bump against my hand deflected the dagger to his cheek, leaving behind a mere cut.

Grunting in frustration, I aimed the dagger for his head, my free hand clutching his throat tightly. William pulled at my hand, his mouth opening and closing as he desperately tried to get even a wisp of air. Looking into his eyes, my anger boiled. This man had ruined everything. He had destroyed my life, had murdered my friends, and hurt the woman I loved. It was time to get even.

"Die, you devil!" I seethed through clenched teeth. The blade glistened in the sunlight as I lifted it again.

Too slow, too late.

I grunted in pain and wrapped my arms around my stomach as I rolled away from William. Pan rampaged through me as the dagger clattered onto the floor. Hands grabbed me and pulled me up, beginning to pull me back to the scaffold, to my doom.

"Hiccup!" Merida screamed. She ran to me, hand reached out.

"Merida!" I screamed back. I reached out my hand to try and grab hers; I needed to touch her, one last time.

She was too far; our fingers didn't even touch.

"No!" Merida ran after me but CinÃ©ed grabbed her arms. She pulled and writhed at his grip but he wouldn't let go.

"No." I whispered, a tear falling from my eye as the King and William stepped to her to try and calm her down. How can the King be so blind to see what was causing his daughter to act like this? Why was he so blind?

I knew the answer: William. I peered at the lord, the same anger as before coming back. They pulled me up the stairs but I resisted,

"You bastard!" I screamed to William, my voice overpowering all other sound. "You egotistical son of a bitch!" I kept going; I had to let it all out. "You'll never succeed! Never! You'll never be king! You'll never marry her!" Up onto the platform. "You will die a sad and broken man and when I see you again in the afterlife, I will laugh as you burn forever in the pits of H-"

The crowd roared as I fell to the floor, my jaw in agonizing pain. My lip felt numb and I couldn't open my mouth any further. Tears brimmed my eyes.

This is a terrible end.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

A scream echoed through the courtyard as the captain delivered a blow to the jaw of the Viking. While the Viking fell to the floor, the captain looked up to the source of the scream, which he found to be the Princess. She was still being held by CinÃ¡ed, fighting against the man's grip and her eyes glued on the Viking.

The captain looked down at the scum as he heard him groan in pain, spitting blood onto the wood. He rolled onto his side, tears rolling down his face and staring into the abyss, his eyes void of emotion except hopelessness. His mouth was slightly agape and blood continuously dripped out of the corner. The captain remembered that he heard a loud crack when his fist had bashed against the Viking's jaw and only now did he noticed the jaw beginning to swell. The punch must've broken his jaw.

The captain snapped his fingers at two of the guards and then pointed at the Viking,

"Let's get this over with." He said sourly, moving to a corner of the scaffold, next to the priest. The two guards nodded in obedience and grabbed the Viking by his arms, ignoring his groan of pain. They dragged him easily to the block, smashing his head onto the wood.

The pain was unbearable in his jaw but Hiccup remained silent. He clutched at the block as he heard the executioner pick up his axe and move towards him. Cold spots of blood dripped onto his neck as the fat man aimed.

As the axe lifted up above his neck, Hiccup looked with blurred vision to the woman he loved. Even from this distance, he could tell she was crying. Even though his jaw hurt so much, he had to say one last thing,

"_Jeg elsker deg_" He whispered. He didn't know whether or not she saw it but he didn't' care. It was a relief to know he tried.

The crowd became more restless as they were becoming more impatient.

Hiccup closed his eyes, waiting for the blow. This was the end.

Without a twinkle of emotion, the executioner swung the axe down.

As the sentence was passed with a clean cut, the crowd roared and cheered, the men cheering for the entertaining sight while the women cheered with relief. Another Viking was gone. They were safe.

But their cheering was drowned by screams. One came from the platform, from Merida. The ones close enough to hear gasped loudly as her scream was proceeded by her fainting. She was caught by the King, who proceeded to carry her back into the castle.

The other scream came from within the crowd.

As the cheering fell silent, every head turned to the source: a blonde woman dressed in Viking garb. Astrid was breathing heavily through her nose as tears brimmed on the edge of her piercing blue eyes. Quivering at the sight of her, the crowd moved away as she

walked towards the scaffold. Carrying herself with dignity, she walked up the stairs and towards the block that was dripping with Hiccup's blood.

Without showing any disgust or fear, she knelt onto the scaffold and grabbed the head of the Viking.

The guards and the executioner watched as Astrid traced her finger on the block, dousing it in blood, and drew a symbol upon Hiccup's forehead. Little did they know that the symbol was of great importance to Vikings. To them, it was the sign of a new chief.

As Astrid finished drawing the symbol, she whispered, "I'm so sorry, Hiccup." But as soon as the words left her mouth, an irrepressible anger pulsed through her. Holding the head by his hair, Astrid stood up and presented it to the crowd,

"Behold!" She screamed, "The Chief of Berk!"

The only sound from the crowd were the gasps of disgust from women. Everyone else was silent. Astrid held the head a little longer, so that the image would forever be engraved in the crowd's memory, before laying it back respectfully by his body.

Immediately, she faced the crowd again, pushing angry tears back.

"This man was innocent!" She screamed, "Innocent, I tell you! All of them were innocent!" The people remained silent. "I have seen many injustices in my life but nothing can compare to this horrendous act!" She glared at William, the one she blamed for everything. She pointed at him.

"You think you can destroy our people, our culture, our mark but I will destroy you with a curse!" Astrid lifted her hands to the air and stared up at the gray sky, begging the Gods silently to hear her curse. The crowd gasped as she lowered her arms and glared to the three men that had murdered her friends and allies. She pointed to William again, "You and your two puppets will die within a fortnight!" She screeched, "With Forseti as my judge, I will not rest until I see you hanged by our own entrails and crows feasting on your eyes! I will not stop breathing until I hear your neck break and see you drenched in you and your kin's blood!" From her belt she grabbed a dagger. In a swift motion, she left a deep cut across her palm. Digging her fingers into the injury, ignoring the pain, she let the blood spill onto the scaffold, "I swear this by my own blood," She dropped her knife and grabbed the axe strapped on her back. Wielding it nimbly, she stared at the two guards that had dragged Hiccup to his doom and the executioner that had sealed it.

She snatched the executioner by his collar, threw him to the ground, and quickly ended his existence, "AND HIS BLOOD!" She screamed and kicked the dead body into the crowd.

The women screamed at the sight of the body, lying limp on the ground with blood spilling endlessly out of the slash in his fat chest. The crowd began to disperse away from the raging Astrid as she walked towards the gates.

"Guards!" William yelled, "Arrest that mad woman! Kill her if need

be!"

Seoc looked around as dozens of castle guards came into the courtyard like a menacing wave. As more and more came, he dreaded to admit that he was scared. There were too many.

"Bring it on!" Astrid yelled, axe at the ready as the first guard approached her. She quickly defeated him and continued to cut down guard after guard after guard. Seoc saw that one of the guards had escaped Astrid's sight and was ready to strike her from behind. He rolled his eyes,

"Oh, for the love of Thor." He muttered. He ran to the guard, lifted his morning star and swiftly ended the man's life with a blow to the head.

"There's another one!" Artair's banshee voice echoed, "Kill him!" The guards unsheathed their sword and approached Seoc. He stared at them and lifted the hood off of his head. He held his mace in one hand and grabbed a knife with the other,

"Come on! See if you can defeat the mighty Snotlout Jorgensen!" The guards attacked but Snotlout quickly ended their struggle. He ran to Astrid to help her keep back the oncoming army, "Having fun?" He panted as he punched a man,

"Time of my life." She panted back. Their fight continued. The Scottish guards couldn't get anywhere near the two without losing their lives. Many stayed back in fear at the raging Vikings. William watched the ongoing battle, seething with disappointment and rage,

"Bring out the archers." He ordered. CinÃ¦ed nodded and rushed to the archer's tower. Within minutes, archers were lined around the battlefield, protected by the height of the parapets. CinÃ¦ed smirked at the battlefield below him, "Ready position!" He ordered. All the archers took a side way position, aimed at the battle, "Nock arrow!" The arrows were nocked simultaneously onto the bows, "Draw!" Archer drew, "AIM!" CinÃ¦ed screamed.

Snotlout heard the echo and looked up. The color drained from his face when he saw the archers, arrows drawn, ready to kill,

"Astrid!" He screamed. She briefly looked up and spotted the archers. The two Vikings began to ran for cover just as CinÃ¦ed shouted the order "release".

They barely managed to duck for cover as the arrows sailed passed them. Many of the guards were struck down. The ones that survived pursued the Vikings as they ran,

"Astrid," Snotlout panted as they kept running through the empty streets, "We have to get out of here. There are too many of them." Astrid nodded and stopped to catch her breath,

"We can't escape through the gate and the well has been blocked." She looked up to the roof, then the parapet, and back. She patted Snotlout's shoulder, "We can climb onto the roof, jump onto the parapet and jump off the wall." He looked up to the roof,

"Will that work?"

"I don't know but we don't have any other options."

"Alright," Snotlout sighed, "I'll give you a boost." He intertwined his hands. Astrid took a quick run and jumped onto the roof. As quietly as they could, they walked and jumped over the roofs, eventually finding an abandoned section of the parapet. The Vikings jumped nimbly onto it and quickly began their descent down the wall.

Once safe on the ground, they began to sprint towards the sanctuary of the forest. Everything went fine, until...

"There they are!" An archer screamed, pointing in the direction of the forest. CinÃed peered and saw the two Vikings fleeing to the forest. He looked at the archer as he took aim,

"Give me that!" He snatched the bow out of the young archer's hand, "You baheids can't aim!" He nocked the arrow. CinÃed pulled the string back and aimed for the man in black. He squinted his eye, took a breath, and released the arrow. The arrow sailed and sailed closer to its target. When the arrow hit the forest line, the man in black disappeared. CinÃed strained to hear something; a cry of pain, something heavy hitting the forest floor but it was silent.

He grunted in frustration. He must've missed.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Astrid kept running as fast as she could. She cared little for where she was going but her muscles were pulling her back to the hideout. She could hear Seoc's - Snotlout's heavy footsteps behind her, but something about it felt off. It was slower than usual and his breathing was heavy. Too heavy.

She didn't look back as the footsteps suddenly stopped but when she heard a loud grunt of pain, she looked.

Snotlout was sitting on the ground, his back leaning against a thick tree. His breathing was shallow and his face scrunched up in pain.

But what caused Astrid to gasp and knees to nearly to collapse was the arrow lodged in Snotlout's chest. She ran to him and fell to her knees, her face filled with panic as she looked at the arrow. Snotlout let out a cry of pain as he reached for the arrow, an unhealthy rattle in his breathing

"Don't touch it!" Astrid screamed as she slapped his hand away. Snotlout coughed, a small trail of blood coming from his mouth

"I want this thing out of me! NOW!" He screeched. Astrid rolled her eyes,

"If you do that, you'll bleed to death!" She took his arm, slung it over her shoulder, and pulled him up to his feet, cringing when he let out another cry, "We have to get you to Heather."

Slowly, Astrid managed to drag the badly wounded Snotlout back to the hideout. Heather had gotten to work on him immediately. She managed to remove the arrow, with much screaming and blood, and managed to suppress the bleeding but it became obvious soon to everyone that Snotlout was beyond saving. The arrow had penetrated his chest dangerously close to his heart and had punctured a lung.

He had much trouble breathing properly and was becoming paler and paler by the minute. Only Astrid and SeÃ²saidh- Spitelout were still with him; Heather had left the room earlier crying and Fionntan had followed her.

Spitelout was sitting beside his son, murmuring to him. Astrid wasn't listening. She was trying to suppress the tears forming in her eyes. She had never realized how important Snotlout really was to her until now. He had been her right-hand man in the operation since the very beginning. They dueled together, they planned escapes together. Snotlout kept her recklessness at bay... sometimes. She kept his humongous ego in check... sometimes. At times, they laughed together or just sat and reminisced on days long gone or Astrid sprained his arm when he got annoying.

She looked down at the dying man, realizing that that will all be gone soon.

"I'm very proud of you, my son." Spitelout said. He took his son's hand and squeezed it. Snotlout sighed and closed his eyes,

"Thanks, dad." He replied weakly. Snotlout's eyes spotted Astrid over his father's shoulder. Spitelout, catching what his son was trying to ask, moved away from his spot and walked to the cloth covered exit. Just before he left, he looked at Astrid and patted her shoulder.

Astrid stood in her spot for a while before she moved towards the bed and sat down on the edge of it. The two Viking only looked at each other. Astrid's eyes were constantly shifting from Snotlout's face to the white bandages that were bound around his wound. She almost cringed when she saw that the blood had already seeped through the many layers of bandage.

"How are you feeling?" She said softly, trying to distract herself. Snotlout gave a light laugh,

"I really want to say that I've felt worse but nothing can be worse than this." He laughed a little louder, followed by a cough that resulted in another trail of blood out of his mouth. They fell silent again, "What do you think Valhalla is like, Astrid?" He whispered suddenly, his eyes staring up at the ceiling. Astrid gasped lightly at his words. Shaking her head, she looked at him angrily.

"Snotlout, you listen to me!" She cried, "We've been at this operation since the beginning! We started this together and, by the Gods, we are going to finish this together! You can't give in! Not now!" She looked away as she stifled a sob, feeling a trail of warm liquid running down her cheek. What was wrong with her? Astrid Hofferson crying?

"The mighty Astrid Hofferson is crying?" He teased. Astrid let out a sound that was an odd mix of a laugh and a sob.

"I'm not made of stone, Snotlout." He chuckled lightly,

"Neither am I." Silence surrounded them again, untilâ€¦

"Can I ask you one last favor?" Snotlout asked. Astrid nodded. He slowly lifted his hand and caressed her cheek. Astrid would normally have punched him but she refrained herself as she didn't want to hurt him. Snotlout took a staggering breath, "Can I kiss you?"

"What?" Astrid asked, stunned.

"Please? I've wanted to do it for a very long time and now might be my only chance." Slowly, Astrid grabbed the hand that was on her cheek, wrapping her fingers around the three he still had left on that hand.

"You know what I just realized?" She leaned closer to him, her finger tracing a small scar on his cheek, "I've wanted to do it too." She leaned down and captured his lips in a tender kiss. Despite feeling weaker by the second, Snotlout found a strength to kiss her back. It didn't last very long but they both enjoyed it. Astrid left the kiss but kept her face close to him,

"Thank you." He whispered. Astrid smiled and caressed his temple lightly and gently,

"Sleep, Snotlout, sleep." She whispered. With a sigh, he closed his eyes.

After a few moments, Astrid stood up and tried to leave the room when the three-fingered hand suddenly wrapped around her wrist. She looked back at Snotlout,

"Can you stay?" He whispered, "I want you here when I wake up." Astrid stared for a moment before she took hold of the hand around her wrist and she sat back down,

"Don't worry, I will." She leaned closer and gave his hand a small squeeze, "Sleep." With a smile, Snotlout closed his eyes once more. After a few minutes, his chest went up and down in a steady, constant pace. He was asleep

Astrid sat vigil by his side for a long time until her eyes became heavy with exhaustion. She fell asleep beside him with her head against his chest, still able to hear his weakening heartbeat.

It was only minutes before midnight when Astrid suddenly woke up. She sat up straight and stared around her, wondering what had woken her up. She looked down at Snotlout, a content smile of his pale face but something was wrong. She leaned closer to him and shook his shoulder gently,

"Snotlout?" She whispered but he was silent and still, "Snotlout?" she shook a little harder and whispered a little louder but he was still silent. Trembling, Astrid leant closer to his mouth, hoping to feel the small tickle of his breath on her cheek. She was greeted by silence.

With an even more trembling hand, she checked his throat for a heartbeat.

Silence.

She leant forward and embraced his cold and limp body, warm tears on her cheeks and nose. For the second time that day, Astrid Hofferson cried.

****Snotlout is missing his pinky and his ring finger (if any of you wanted to know)****

****If anybody needs me, I'll be hiding. Oh, and if you leave a review, please remember that I'm human and have feelings that can be hurt by words.****

****Review, favorite, follow.****

40. Madness

****Well, you guys took last chapter a lot better than I thought you would. I half expected you guys to throw every insult at me and threaten me with torches, pick axes, and pitchforks. Thank you for not doing that.****

****University is starting on Wednesday. Super nervous but also excited!****

****Now, I'll tell some of the reasons on why I killed them all. It's always been a dream of mine to write a story where pretty much all the characters die, so this story is a dream come true for me. I've never read another Mericcup fanfiction where their love ends in absolute tragedy, so I decided to change that. Also, I've never seen their love forbidden to level as in this story (difference in status, two cultures that despise each other to the core, and another man in the picture).****

****Sad news, there are only three chapters left of Until the End.****

****Reminder: Poll's still open. Vote while you can****

****WARNINGS: probably just sadness****

****Chapter #38: Madness****

Merida's POV

It's a dream. It had to be a dream. They aren't dead. They can't be dead. Any moment now Rapunzel will walk through the door and tell me to get up, just like she always does.

Keeping my eyes closed, I shuffled under the heavy sheets, moving the warmer blankets off of me. Laying down on a more comfortable spot, I tried to remember the dream.

I say dream; it was more of a nightmare. Jack, Rapunzel, and Hiccup were to be executed for high treason. A shiver ran up my spine as the

brutal images racked my mind. Rapunzel's short hair, Jack's bleeding stump, Hiccup's broken jaw, their headless bodies. I don't remember anything after Hiccup was executed. The instant it happened, I found myself lying in my bed.

My thoughts were disrupted by the sound of the door. I let out a relieved sigh; there she was, my best friend. The window was opened, letting in the bright light of the morning. Moments later, a hand came on my shoulder and shook me,

"Wake up, my Lady." A sweet voice whispered.

"Rapunzel." I whined as I sat up, "You know how I h-" My voice got caught in my throat. It wasn't Rapunzel. It was MÃ¡iri! "What are you doing here? Where's Rapunzel?" I demanded. The girl looked at me with an expression mixed with confusion and sadness.

"My Lady," She started slowly, the quiver in her voice sending chills of fear through me. It was a dream, right? "Rapunzel is dead. She was executed yesterday evening."

"No." I whispered, shaking my head viciously at her. She was lying. She had to be! "You're lying!" I hollered. MÃ¡iri took a flinch away from me and nervously shook her head,

"I swear, Your Majesty, I'm not lying." Even with all the fear she was emanating, I refused to believe her. It was just a dream, it couldn't be anything else. Somehow everyone knew of this dream and were playing a sick trick on me

My nightmare couldn't have been true! It couldn't!

* * *

<p>Merida's POV

Everyone looked at me as though I had gone crazy. I'm not crazy, I just wasn't in the mood to do anything.

It didn't take long to find out that my nightmare was true. The scaffold was still covered in blood, it was only Aster in the stables, the fire in the smithy was out and the cut on William's cheek was stitched shut and healing.

I told everyone to leave me alone and I shut myself in my room. I just sat there staring at the dying fire, a tear rolling down my cheek every now and then. I thought about everything that happened. It was all my fault. I did this to them. They could tell me a thousand times that it wasn't my fault but I wouldn't believe them because it was my fault.

Eventually, I stood up to stretch my legs. The moment I stood, I felt like I was being watched, that I wasn't alone in the room. I turned to the left and the right but no one was there. That is, until I turned around.

There she stood in front of me. She was wearing a simple black dress with gold decoration at the hem and white puffs at her elbows and shoulder, a tartan sash clipped around her waist. Her curly, wild red hair was done up in a high bun, hidden behind a crown, with two stray

curls shaping her round face. She had a long silver necklace with a ruby around her neck and long earrings, sparkling with diamonds. Her cold cerulean eyes stared at me, a smug smile on her face.

"Well, well, well." She said in a low voice, "Look how far you've fallen." She smiled evilly at me as she started fiddling with her necklace, admiring and polishing the bright red ruby.

"What do you mean?" I asked quietly. She let the ruby fall as she walked to a chair and sat down, crossing her legs.

"Well, you went from an independent princess to a woman who can't even save the people she claims to love!" She picked at her fingers, seemingly removing dirt from underneath them, "Pathetic" she mumbled.

"Excuse me!?" I screeched at her, taking a step closer and pointing an accusing finger, "I'm not pathetic and you know it! If I was pathetic, I would have stood by and done nothing! I tried! I tried to save them!"

"Ah," She retorted, standing up again, "But you didn't save them! After everything you did, you still couldn't save them because you don't have the guts to stand up to the one that is to blame for all of this! And because of that you're pathetic!" Every word stung as they left her mouth. I tried to shut them out but couldn't. They boiled in me, making me angry and upset at once. Soon, the anger boiled over and I screamed,

"SHUT IT!" And my fist lashed out at her. The sound of breaking glass echoed through the room as the mirror shattered and landed in thousands of pieces to the floor. Pain racked through my knuckles as the thousands of cuts started bleeding profoundly, the blood dripping on the floor.

"My Lady!" MÃ;iri exclaimed as she ran into the room. She grabbed my hand and gasped loudly when she spotted the many injuries on my hand, "What happened?" She inquired, ripping part of her apron to cover the injury.

I lied that I was practicing a dance and that I accidentally hit the mirror. She simply nodded. I couldn't tell her that some woman had been in my room and had taunted me, which led to me breaking the mirror.

She would think I was mad.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

"I'm worried." Kozmotis admitted.

"About what?" William sneered as he put down a letter from an ally on his desk. He reached for a bottle of wine and a goblet as Kozmotis continued speaking,

"About the Princess Merida, My Lord. I spoke to her maid earlier and she claims she heard the Princess speaking to her own reflection as if it were a separate person." The general reported while William

poured himself a full glass of wine. He took a large swig of it before replying,

"I wouldn't worry about it, Kozmotis." He replied, "It probably just nerves. After all, she's getting married in two days time." He smirked at the General. "If that's all, you can leave." He ordered and took another large drink from his wine.

"There's actually something else." The General stammered. After a moment's silence, William signaled to the man to continue. Kozmotis took a deep breath, "I received a letter from my sister-in-law in England and she informed me that my daughter has fallen ill. With my Lord's permission, I wish to go to England and tend to my daughter." Kozmotis swallowed the lump in his throat as he waited for William to answer. A feeling in his gut told him that William would not let him go to England or, if he did, it would only be for a week. Kozmotis prayed it would be the week; it would be better than nothing. It had been such a long time since he had last seen his little girl. She had been nine at the time and now, she was thirteen. Any time would be better than no time.

William quickly chugged down the rest of his wine before giving his answer. He stared the general in the eye,

"Be back in three weeks." He ordered. William could see the general trying to hide a smile as the older man bowed.

"Thank you a thousand times, my Lord" The man beamed. William nodded and waved his hand. Kozmotis bowed and left the room, closing the door behind him. William chugged down the rest of his wine before turning his attention to another important matter.

On his desk stood a small wooden box encased with gold and a few precious gems. It could easily pass off as a jewelry box but no jewels were in it. William lifted the lid.

From the box, he pulled forth a small vial with a small amount of white powder. At first glance, one might think it was sugar but, William knew by it was far more dangerous than sugar. The powder was water hemlock, one of the most poisonous substances available in DunBroch. It was fast moving and could kill a grown man in minutes, ideal for murdering someone. He had bought the powder with only one target in mind.

The King's wine.

The plan was that, after William married Merida, a bribed servant would serve the King wine poisoned with the hemlock. With the King dead and Merida being a woman, the crown would pass on to William and he would finally achieve what he had planned for years. He would finally prove everyone that had doubted him that he was right all along, that he would be the greatest MacInroy ever.

"You'll see, Father. You'll see." He mumbled to himself but when he looked to the poison again, William began to doubt himself.

Could he really do it? Could he poison a man who was ordained by God? Could poison someone who had done him no wrong? Could he damn an innocent man?

William could almost hear his father's voice inside his head as he pondered. He was calling him weak and a coward. William gritted his teeth, telling the voice to shut up and leave him be. He gripped the vial tighter as he made his decision.

He threw the vial back into the box. After locking it securely, he picked it up and threw it out the window. It landed in the river with a loud splash.

He could wait a few more years. He waited this long for a claim to the throne, he could wait a little longer to ascend to it.

* * *

><p>Third Person POV

Maireada pulled her ragged cloak closer around her as the bitter cold wind blew around her. She was returning to the Red Apple, expecting another lonely, empty night. The death of the Viking had not gone well for the woman. She had grieved profoundly at his death which in turn led the owner of the Red Apple to label her as insane and unable to work; at least the elder woman was fond enough of Maireada to not send her onto the streets. The other girls had turned away from her, sneering at her for feeling pity for a Viking.

She didn't have a friend or even an acquaintance who would give her a friendly smile. She was completely alone.

Pulling her cloak even closer as the wind bit her, Maireada walked through the town square, past the ominous scaffold where they had died only yesterday. A tear fell from her eye and she wanted to keep walking when she spotted something on the other end of the square. Her curiosity peaking, she speed to it and gasped loudly when she saw it was a person!

They lay on the grass with their face down, wearing nothing but a sleeping gown! Concern taking over, Maireada took off her own cloak and threw it over the person. She picked the person up and carried her bridal style back to the Red Apple.

Maireada ignored the hundreds of stares she was getting from the other girls and some men as she carried the unconscious figure to her room. All the previous decorations it had were gone and the dressing table was vacant of any item but she paid no heed to the desolation as she placed the person on the bed and under the blanket. In the light of the candles, Maireada instantly recognized her as being the Princess!

She immediately got to work to make sure the princess was fine, checking for injuries and for fever. As she worked, Maireada's mind wandered, asking herself: why was the Princess out in the middle of the night in just her night gown with no guards or escorts? Had she gone insane?

I hope you guys caught the gist that Merida is going insane.

Review, favorite, follow

Replies

****AmaraWinterFrost: I know it isn't fair****

****trueloveofredheads: I am absolutely nuts!****

****waveringshadow: thank you for your lovely review.****

****Nonuser: No, Merida's not pregnant. And can I ask you to be patient with me? I have a job and I'm starting university on Wednesday. I'm not sure how much time I'll have for writing so please, please, please be patient with me. I'm not abandoning this fiction without good reason and frankly, I don't have a good reason.

****Soccerkat5: Ok, but I don't think I could ever be close to George R. R. Martin in my writing****

****feathersnow: That get's explained in a future chapter****

****Antermaris: I am going to do an alternate ending and you might just have given me a little idea. Thank you.****

****Lilianne Lei: Thank you so much for your review****

****Angelic Beast12: Yeah, I am a maniac but trust me you're going to love me after chapter 39 and 40****

****Tynan: I never thought of thatâ€¦ Damn! And Merida is not pregnant, if that was what you were asking****

****Review, favorite, follow****

41. Haunted

****Originally going to be part of the next chapter but once again, I decided to split it in two. ****

****I'm loving university but, it's a lot of work. Let's just say that I'm grateful to have no classes on Thursdays. Means I have a bit more time to write. ON tumblr, I came up with a tag for my writing. The tag is: evil genius is at it again. It's kinda fitting, no?****

****There's two William's in this chapter. You can decipher who's who because one will have the prefix of "Little" and the other nothing.

****There's mention of something named Beowulf. All you really need to know for this chapter is that it is an Old English epic poem.****

****Reminder: Poll's still open****

****WARNINGS: child abuse****

****Chapter #39: Haunted****

Third Person POV

Tomorrow was the day. The day that Princess Merida of DunBroch would wed to Lord William MacInroy, a union that would be remembered through the centuries. A union between the most powerful clans in the kingdom, a union that would prove dangerous to DunBroch's enemies.

The castle was going mad with preparations. Decorations were being hung up, cutlery was washed, wine and ale were collected in the cellar, and the feast was being prepared in the kitchen in the evening. The cooks would cook through the night to bring forth a feast like no noble or royal had seen before. Maids galore rampaged through the halls, wiping and sweeping away the most minor speck of dust. Everything had to be perfect for the momentous occasion.

Late at night, William sat quietly in his room, reading a religious text in Latin, his foot resting on the edge of the chair. He preferred to read stories with adventure and fighting but that night he felt the need to read something more peaceful.

It was close to midnight when he finished reading. Closing the book with a sigh, he rubbed his tired eyes and decided to go to bed; after all, his dream would come true in the morning.

Already dressed in his sleeping gown, William instantly slid into bed and soon feel asleep but not before quickly pondering a strange occurrence that morning.

Artair told him that the princess was brought back by some woman, claiming she found the princess in the middle of the night passed out and dressed only in a night gown. Knowing it was bad luck to see the bride before the wedding, William could not validate whether or not it was completely true though Artair had ensured him it was.

Deciding to not worry about it, William turned to his side and quickly fell into a deep sleep. When he opened his eyes again, he stood in a world covered entirely in black. He looked around him but all there was to see were the stars and galaxies that twinkled below him. Besides that, he saw nothing, he heard nothing. He began to walk, not sure if he was going forwards or backwards, to his left or to his right.

Indecipherable time passed when someone called his name in the distance.

"William!" The Lord let out a gasp at the sudden sound, denied fear in his stomach when he recognized who the voice belonged to, someone he didn't want to remember.

"William!" The voice called again. The source sounded as though it were behind William. When he turned, he was blinded by the orb of shimmering white light that floated before him. After adjusting to the light, he carefully walked to it, his hand shaking as he reached out to touch the light.

"William!" The voice said, becoming louder as he came closer to the orb. The instant he touched the light, it dissolved around him, transporting him to a large and richly decorated room. William recognized it immediately. It was his room when he was just a child.

He turned to walk to the door but froze when he saw someone.

In a chair rested in front of the fireplace sat a boy. William couldn't see his face because the boy's back was turned to him. William paced to the chair and looked down at the boy. Black hair and wearing a small tartan with a black shirt. The child's eyes were glued to the book on his lap, a small smile playing on his face as he absorbed each word.

William recognized the boy: it was himself, when he was 8 years old. He was seeing a memory.

"William!" It was the voice again but this time it sounded strict, demanding, not the sweet and charming William had heard earlier. William knew what would happen next: his father would enter the room. When the voice had called, little William's eyes shot wide. Moving quickly, he hid the book he had been reading under the rug in front of him and picked up a book from the table beside him, opening to some random page. Only just had he opened the book when the door swung open and Robert MacInroy entered the room.

William took a step away from his little self, gazing at his father with fear in his eyes. The figure he saw before him was a different figure than he remembered. This man was clean-shaven, his hair neatly combed, well dressed and not oozing the stench of beer. His little self closed the book and stood up from the chair, smiling brightly at the man.

Robert smiled at his son and looked down at the book he still held in his hand

"What do you have there?" He asked with a happy undertone. Little William walked to his father and handed him the book. Robert took the heavy book, smiling brightly when he read the title.

"History of the MacInroys." He muttered. He looked down to the boy and ruffled his hair with a light chuckle, "Good choice." He praised, his eyes catching the stack of books on the table. "And what else have you got her-" Robert stopped in his path to the table when he felt a change of level on the floor. Looking down, he saw he was standing on a bump in the rug.

Little William's eyes widened in fear as his father picked up the hidden book and read the title. Agonizingly slow, Robert's glare turned to the boy.

William could still remember the expression his father had on his face when he found the book. One of disgust and, worst of all, disappointment.

"What is this?" Robert inquired, holding the book up so that little William could clearly see. The boy gulped nervously, wringing his hands and looking to the floor.

"A book." The child replied, a shake in his voice.

"And what is the title of this book?" Robert demanded, holding the book closer to the child.

"Beowulf." The boy muttered, holding his head down in shame.

William looked away, unable to watch what would happen next. He remembered this so well. Secretly reading a book that his father didn't approve of. He had done it so often when he was younger but this moment had changed that.

William cringed when he heard the boy cry out in pain and his father beginning to yell at his little self. He tried to drown out the painful words but his memory was strong. His father was yelling at him for reading impure words, things that he claimed would "destroy him".

"_Galoot!_" Robert screamed before stomping out of the room and slamming the door shut. It fell silent in the room, the only sound coming from the fireplace as it cracked. A sniff resounded.

William turned around and saw his little self sitting on the floor and crying, holding his hand to the spot on his head where his father had hit him with the book. A loud crack came from the fireplace, turning both their attention to the book that was now smoldering in the fire. The child let out another sniff.

William took a step towards him, reaching out his hand to lay it on the child's shoulder, when the room dissolved around him and formed into another one: the drawing room. It was nighttime but it was warm and bright in the room. Three people sat in various places. Christine by the window, working on a small embroidery project; Graham with his lute by the table, practice and writing down notes on a piece of parchment; and Little William by the fireplace, once again, reading. All of them were dressed in black. William knew instantly why they were dressed so somberly: this memory was a few days after the death of his mother and his youngest brother.

"Enough." William mumbled to himself, trying to will himself to wake up. He didn't want to watch what would unfold in only seconds. He couldn't watch; the pain was too much.

The door slammed open, the figure of Robert appearing in the room, hair disheveled and carrying a bottle of beer in his hand

"William!" He slurred loudly, stumbling towards the boy sitting by the light. Little William stood up, closing the book and holding it as if he thought it would protect him. "What is you reading, boy?" He screamed, grabbing the book and holding it to his face upside down, "More filth!?" He screeched, the book flying to the other end of the room

"No, father." Little William called, "It was a book about-" He couldn't finish as Robert grabbed his chin roughly.

"Stop lying to me!" He thundered. He pushed little William to the floor, putting the bottle on the mantle while reaching for the stand that held the metal tools for the fire. "The belt didn't teach you anything! Maybe this will." And he pulled forth the fire poker.

"No." Little William begged, "Father, please!" The boy shuffled back as much as possible until he hit the wall. The boy huddled in on himself to protect himself.

"Father, no!" Graham hollered as Christine screamed. Little William cried out as his father pulled on his hair and forced him to face him.

"You'll never amount to anything." Robert whispered darkly, "You're not worthy of the name MacInroy and as prove of that," The pointed end of the poker came dangerously close to the boy's eye, "I'm going to fuck up your pretty little face." He released little William's head, purposely making sure that it bumped against the hard, stone wall. The boy watched in terror as his father lifted the metal rod and swung down. A burning pain pulsed through his eyes and little William cried out in pain. He opened his eyes, surprised he could still see with his injured one, and saw his father lift the rod again.

"No." William whispered, watching Graham run to the boy, "No! Graham, don't!" He screamed, watching his brother as he threw his body over that of his little self, protecting the child from the blow.

The instant Robert swung down, William was sucked back into the room of black, panting heavily with tears brimming his eyes as he thought back to what he had just seen. A hole in his shoulder was what Graham got for that stunt. He recovered a few days after and rarely let William out of his sight since. William had thought it annoying for his brother to stalk his every move but he was grateful because the constant watch stopped the beatings.

A tear fell from his eye when he thought about the fact that he never repaid his brother for it.

Crying, William kept walking, watching as stars flew by with each step that he took. He missed Graham so much. If anything, he missed him more than his mother or Boyd. They were so close; they did almost everything together. When news came of Graham's death, William shut himself in his room for a week, barely eating or drinking anything.

"Willl."

William stopped in his path, angry fuming in him at the sound of the voice. Was his father back to torment him?

"Leave me a-" His voice got caught in his throat at the sight of Graham, standing tall and proud in front of him. Without thinking, he ran to his brother, wanting nothing more than to hug him but when William touched him, he disappeared. "No!" He screamed, searching frantically around him. "Graham!" He hollered desperately, his voice echoing loudly. His search ended when he saw a figure in the distance, slowly walking to him. "Graham?" William whispered, his voice shaking.

The figure stepped into the light, carrying a stoic look on his face as blood expanded into his white shirt and blue vest.

"What happened to you, Will? What happened to the friend I once knew?" Flynn spoke slowly and his voice was oozing with grief.

"Go away!" William screamed, his tears falling without stop, "Get out of here!" He wanted to turn and run but his fear sent him to the floor as the shapes of the blacksmith, the maid, and the stableman

appeared in front of him. They were staring at him with absolute hatred in their eyes, scars circling their neck where the axe had severed their head from their body.

"No! Go away!" He thundered but they kept coming closer, their sight never wavering. William pulled his knees to his chest, expecting hits to assault him but nothing. Panting heavily, he looked up to find he was alone once more. He lowered his head and started sobbing into his knee.

"William?" A small hand laid itself gently on his shoulder, scaring the lord. He looked up with a gasp and stared into Merida's blue eyes. She was smiling at him but still carried a concerned frown on her face. Without thinking, William threw his arms around her neck and hugged her tight, desperately in need of some comfort. Merida made hushing sounds as she rubbed William's back in an attempt to calm him down.

"It's alright, William." She cooed, "Everything will be fine." But then, William felt a punch to his stomach. Gasping for breath, he fell back to the floor, clutching his stomach as blood spilled out of the gaping wound. He glared at Merida, who glared back with an equally intense stare. In her hand she held a silver knife, the blade covered in red to the hilt. She knelt beside him, snatching his throat in her free hand while she aimed the knife at his heart.

"Die, you devil." She uttered.

The instant the knife struck, William's eyes shot open. Letting out a scream, he sat up straight in his bed, feeling around his chest to find no injury of any sort. Placing a hand to his sweaty forehead, William threw himself back to the mattress, letting out a sigh of relief. It was just a dream; Merida did not kill him.

He looked to the window, finding the sun was already starting to rise. Today was his wedding. Smiling, William got out of bed, deciding to get ready for his special day.

He washed face, combed his hair, cleaned his teeth and put on the clothing that had been laid out the night before. It didn't take long for him to finish. Once he was he went to the window and watched the world below him

He just stood there, staring to the rising sun until he heard the door click behind him.

****Who could possibly be at the door?****

****Galoot is Scottish slang for "idiot"****

****If you guys felt sorry at all for William, let me know because that's what I hoped to achieve with this chapter.****

****Review, favorite, follow****

****Please read this****

****This is not related to Until the End in anyway but, some of you may have noticed I posted a Frozen fiction called Radiance a little while**

ago. It's likely that I'll continue with it and I'm looking for some constructive critique on the chapter I have posted and a beta for the rest. If any of you want to beta or know someone who could beta it, please send me a message.**

42. Retribution

Fast update guys! You guys will love me after this.

With last chapter, I, by no means, was trying to condone William's actions. Nothing can condone what he's done.

A guest had a very good question regarding William beating Merida while he was beaten himself as a child. I never mentioned this but William witnessed his father abusing his mother, so he basically grew up having little respect for women and thinking that the only way to get a woman to listen to you was by beating her or threatening her. And then you had Artair and CinÃ;ed enter his life, who thought the exact same way. You can say that William grew up with some poor role models.

In one paragraph, it gets a little religious, so if it's offensive in any way, I'm terribly sorry.

Reminder: poll's still open. It will close in 2 chapters.

WARNING: Character deaths

TRIGGER WARNINGS: suicide. One thing you have to know is that in medieval times, suicide was a sin.

Chapter #40: Retribution

Third Person POV

You were my everything; now you're gone. I don't have the strength to carry on. Skies always seemed sunny when you were here. _Now there's nothing but gloom in my atmosphere._

Merida woke when the glimmer's of the morning sun peeked over the mountain and into her room. Not feeling tired anymore, she stepped out of bed, not knowing what she would do that she was up.

I loved you so much. You were all I had. Now my whole world s depressing and sad.

She stood in the room, staring ahead of her until she decided to do some she hadn't done in a long time. She went on her knees and prayed. She prayed for her Lord to be merciful and prayed for absolution for what she was going to do.

I'd like to start feeling other than blue.

Finishing her prayers, she left the cold floor and walked to her desk, grabbing the box that laid on the edge and moving it to the center, directly in front of her. She opened the lid, revealing a brand new silver dagger.

But you were my everything

Tears in her eyes, Merida grabbed the dagger, slowly pointing it to her heart.

What can I do?

"Are you sure about that?" A voice said behind her. The dagger moved away from its target but remained its threat to it. Merida didn't turn around but she recognized the voice. It was her, that wench in the black dress, donned with jewelry and an ever present grin on her face. The one that knew everything about Merida, each little secret or thought.

"What do you want?" Merida snapped, continuing to stare in front of her, the dagger keep its position.

"Giving you a reason to not do it." She replied, referring to the knife. Merida let out a sob, looking at her over her shoulder,

"What reason could you possibly have?!" She wept, "I don't want to live anymore!" The knife fell from her hand as she sobbed into her hands, her depression taking over. Merida had completely lost the will to live. They had all tried to lift her mood, to give her a reason but their attempts were futile. Oblivious to the truth that caused her sadness, no one could help her.

A hand found its way onto the princess' shoulder, the touch sending a shiver through her.

"Why do this if the one that caused your pain lives?" The voice whispered coldly in her ear. Merida gasped and turned around, the knife clattering to the floor, but all she saw was an empty room. She was gone.

The sun rose a little further through the window, the light reflecting off of the blade into Merida's eyes. Slowly picking it up, the words echoed through her mind. Pondering on them for a little while, she knew she had one last purpose, one last thing she had to do.

Not caring for modest or decency, she walked out of her room in her nightgown, holding the knife in her hand in a way that it was hidden from sight. No one was up yet, much to her relief. She didn't want to be caught, not that she would be punished anyway, for there are 7 things that are an abomination, according to her God. Among them: haughty eyes, lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. She was doing her God's work for him, what punishment would there be for her? If she was punished, at least she would drag the devil with her.

Her target would be behind the door she now faced, hopefully still asleep. She grabbed the handle and opened the door, cursing in her mind at the sight of William standing at the window, looking out at the world. He was completely dressed, ready for the events that should've happened that noon.

"Unfortunately he won't be attending them." Merida thought, shutting the door behind her, catching William's attention.

"Merida what are you doing here?" She didn't say anything in reply. Instead, she stared at him with a glare oozing with hate.

"_His judgment cometh and right soon._"

"Wha-?" Was all William could utter before Merida lifted the knife and rammed it into his chest, the blade going deep into his lung. He fell haphazardly to the floor, his back leaning against the wall as his eyes became glued to the dagger and the blood that was slowly dripping into his clothing. Breathing heavily and feeling faint, William grabbed the dagger and pulled it out of him, groaning loudly at the pain it caused. He knew that it would make the injury worse but he knew he would die anyway; no one survived this kind of injury.

He began muttering in Latin, asking forgiveness from his mother and Graham. He continued muttering, his hand unconsciously going to his injury to staunch the bleeding. His breathing became more labored as time ticked by slowly. Little black dots speckled his eyes as he looked to Merida, still standing with an emotionless face.

"Merida." He mumbled weakly, using all his strength to lift his bloodied hand and a vague motion for her to come closer. The princess knelt down beside me. William took a deep, shuddering breath, "Can you ever forgive me for all the things I've done?" He wasn't expecting her to ever forgive him but he had to at least try. To his surprise, Merida nodded.

"But only if you give me something I want." William tried to sit up but recoiled in pain.

"Anything." He mumbled, fighting back a spasm of pain.

Merida stared at the dying man with absolute hatred in her eyes. Was he really that stupid to think that he could buy her forgiveness? He didn't deserve her forgiveness. Not from her, not from anyone. Without him seeing, Merida grabbed the knife and leaned closer to his face.

"I want Hiccup back, you son of a bitch." And she rammed the knife once more into his chest, stabbing him right through the heart. He let out one last weak gasp before his head fell limply onto his shoulder, the life in his eyes quickly draining until there was absolutely nothing. She checked for a heartbeat but there was nothing.

He was dead.

Letting out a low chuckle, she pulled the dagger out of him and left the room, blood dripping into the hem of her gown and onto the clean wooden floor. Her chuckle grew as she returned to her room, escalating into a boisterous laugh when the door shut.

_Gone! Gone! Gone! _

She sang, doing mad prances and spins around the room, waving the knife above her and swinging blood onto her face. She hopped to her closet and snatched the wedding dress that hung on the door. She threw it to the ground and assaulted it, snickering loudly.

Won't be needing this anymore!

She giggled like a little child as she wiped the dagger clean on the pure white fabric and tore it to shreds, throwing the pieces into every corner of the room. She continued to tear until it didn't look anything like a dress. Still giggling, she lay herself on the fabric and writhed in the fabric, pretending to be lying in the snow and making snow angels.

"Merida, what have you done?" It was her again. Gasping, the princess sat up, staring straight into her blue eyes. She carried a worried frown, not the usual smug smile.

"What do you think? I punished the one that destroyed my life."

"Punished?" She retorted, "You murdered him!" Furious, Merida stood up and faced the woman in front of her.

"I didn't murder him." The woman chuckled evilly and rolled her eyes,

"Oh, Merida. You did murder him." She lifted an elegant finger and wiped it across Merida's cheek, staining the delicate pale skin with deep red. "You carry the evidence." And suddenly, she was gone.

Starting to shake, Merida looked at her hands, both stained with blood. Feeling sick, she rushed to the washing bowl, desperately splashing her red-stained hands in the water in an attempt to wash the filth away. But no matter how hard she scrubbed, the red remained.

"Go away!" She hollered at her hands as she watched the red spread across her hands onto her arms. Then she saw the red on her nightgown, it too spreading across the rest of the clean white fabric. With a scream, she pulled the gown off and threw it into the fire, the fabric burning quietly as she donned a black dress when the chills attacked her.

She knelt to the floor, sitting in the shreds of the wedding dress, and reached for the knife and pointed it again at her heart.

"_Mer!_" A voice called out. Gasping, she ran to the window and heard the voice call her again, the source coming from the forest. She knew the voice. It was the one sound she wanted to hear more than anything.

"Hiccup?" she breathed, immediately running out the door. She kept running, past confused maids and guards. Past the first gate and past merchants in the market. Past the just barely open outer gate into the forest.

"Hiccup!" She cried in hope, running into the ring of stones, "Hiccup!" She called again. The only reply she got were the chirping of birds and the rustle of the early morning wind. Then a hum. Before her floated a familiar blue flame.

Eyes glued on the little blue flame, Merida followed it deep into the

forest. The trail kept going until she reached a clearing.

"Hiccup?" She called into the clearing but all she heard was the bubbling stream, a stream she was familiar with. It was the stream, the clearing where she met Hiccup, where they spent so much time together, where they were caught by William.

Numbly and tears in her eyes, she slumped to the stream, collapsing beside the stream in grief.

"I'm so sorry, Hiccup!" She hollered at the ground, her heavy breathing mixed with her loud sobs. She looked to the sky, the pink clouds looking down at her, "I did this to you! To us!" She fell back to the ground, clenching her fist tightly, feeling the dagger she still carried. The sun began to shine on it, making it almost seem ethereal. She lifted the dagger, presenting it to the sky as the light continued to reflect off the blade.

"Dear God, forgive me." She whispered, pointing the tip to herself. She cried out as pain hit her. She fell onto her side, silent tears rolling out of her eyes as she stared at the hilt of the blade that was now impaled in her stomach. She saw black dots in her eyes and felt an odd sense of peace. Finally relaxing, she closed her eyes and pictured Hiccup's face in her mind, waiting for her at a set of gates.

"I'm coming Hiccup" She mumbled as the very last breath left her body.

****Yeahâ€¦ I'll leave you guys to celebrate William's death. I realize that you can't die that quick from a stab to the stomach but for dramatic reason, I did it anyway.****

****Review, favorite, follow.****

43. Happily Ever After

****I'm a terrible human being for leaving you guys hanging for so long but school got in the way. Good news though, I got 80% on my linguistics midterm!****

****Second last chapter guys.****

****REMINDER: Poll closes when I post the next chapter. Vote while you can.****

****WARNINGS: Feels****

****Chapter #41: Happily Ever After****

Third Person POV

The first thing she saw was pink. Not the bold pink of fine silk but the soft pink of roses in midsummer. She blinked her eyes once more to ensure that she wasn't hallucinating. Sitting up in the field, her eyes remained glued to the pink, gasping lightly in awe when she saw it were clouds floating above her.

As the cool spring breeze blew through her curls, Merida looked to

her surroundings. She was on a hill that lay in the middle of a field that was surrounded by pines and oaks of various sizes. She moved her hand to push herself up only to have her fingers brush against a smooth surface. A smile appeared on her face when she saw her trusty bow laying beside her.

As she stood up with her bow in hand, laughter echoed through the clearing. Out of the forest appeared two children who were chasing something that was flying ahead of them. Curious, Merida slowly started to walk to them, watching as they continued their chase.

"Catch it!" The blonde girl screamed to the other girl, swiping her hand near the butterfly in an attempt to catch it. The other girl, a black haired child with light caramel skin, giggled and jumped to the little insect. Her smile disappeared when she saw Merida. The other girl followed suit.

"Hello, Your Majesty." The blonde girl said, giving Merida a polite curtsy. The Princess only needed to see the child's amber eyes to know who it was,

"Diana?" Merida uttered slowly. The blonde replied with a nod. Merida stared at her for a moment before embracing her tightly; she may not have known her best friend's child during her life very well but she had been very fond of her.

"_Namaste._" A small voice said beside them. Looking down, Merida saw black-haired child holding her hands in prayer and bowing her head. Merida smiled at the child and lowered herself to her knees that she was the same height as her.

"Hello." She said kindly, smiling at the little girl, "What's your name?" The girl smiled back but stared to the ground, playing with her fingers,

"Sera." She mumbled.

"That's a very pretty name." Merida complimented, eliciting a sweet smile from Sera, who finally greeted her gaze. Nothing about Sera seemed at all familiar except her large icy blue eyes. Those same exact eyes had belonged to North; she was standing in front of his daughter.

She was not even given the opportunity to ask as both children had grabbed her hand and began to drag her into the woods.

The further they progressed, the more the canopy seemed to close on them but Merida barely noticed as the two girls were kept dragging her through the trees while never ceasing to smile or giggle.

The moment the canopy of the trees covered the sky entirely, they found themselves out of the forest in a completely different environment.

Merida let out a gasp as she beheld the sight in front of her. The backdrop was a night sky, filled with billions of stars. Not just stars though; planets and pink and purple nebulae rotated and swished past the dozen of zigzagging bridges and staircases made of rainbows. Unconsciously, she let Sera and Diana drag her further onto a bridge

as she continued to stare in awe. She watched as people walked on the bridges and disappear again as they walked through a gateway. She could see several glided gateways but was too far to see the symbols that resided above them. Her eyes were glued on the symbols until the girls suddenly let her hands go.

"Come on!" Sera called as she ran through the gate, quickly disappearing from sight. Diana followed suit.

Merida looked up at the massive gateway to see a cross at the peak. Gulping nervously, she stepped through the gate.

She walked upon the same pink clouds she had seen in the field only minutes earlier. Buildings appeared around her, people entering and leaving while smiling at her when she passed. Up ahead, she heard Diana giggle and watched as the child ran into the arms of someone she recognized. The man picked Diana up, the child whispering to him and pointing to Merida. He looked at her with his amber eyes and smiled.

"Jack?" She uttered out but she was distracted when someone joined him, "Rapunzel?" Merida choked out as the woman stopped beside Jack, nodding with a smile. Bursting into tears, Merida ran to her and enveloped her in a tight up, sobbing into her shoulder.

"It's ok." Rapunzel cooed, wrapping her arms around her friend and stroking her hair gently, "It's alright. It's all over."

The Princess continued to cry tears of joy, tugging at Rapunzel's dress as if trying to reassure herself that she really was there and this wasn't just another nightmare.

"Hey, do I get a hug too?" Jack joked, eliciting a laugh from Merida as she pulled away from Rapunzel.

"In your dreams, Jack." She replied, giving him a light punch on his shoulder, getting a mocked look of pain from him. Diana giggled,

"You're so silly, daddy." Jack looked at his daughter

"Am I now?"

"No, my papa is sillier!" Sera exclaimed as she ran to them with a woman not far behind. Merida guessed that she was Sera's mother and North's wife. The woman took notice of the newest arrival and copied the same gesture Sera had given Merida upon the first meeting.

"_Namaste_, Princess Merida." She said gracefully in her nightingale voice. "My name is Paro. You know my husband."

"North." Merida answered, to which Paro nodded. That's when she realized that North was missing.

"Where is North?" Paro didn't answer. Instead she pointed to something behind Merida. She looked and spotted North and Flynn heading towards the group.

"Hello, _Vashe Velichestvo_, it's good to see you again." North spoke

in his ever boisterous voice.

Sera giggled and ran to her father, jumping into his arms though he just barely managed to catch her due to his surprise. In one swooping motion and laughing happily, he put the girl on his shoulders.

Having seen everyone so happy and all reunited filled Merida with envy. Hiccup wasn't there. She would be alone again but this time for eternity. Seeing her smile fall, North placed a hand on her shoulder, "There was a reason why I was not here to greet you, Merida." He explained, his voice falling softer. He looked up at something behind Merida.

Slowly, the princess turned and gasped at who she saw. Tall, auburn hair and those mesmerizing green eyes. Her heart pounded and her tears of joy returned.

Hiccup stood frozen in his spot. She was really here, in front of him. He wanted to run to her but his feet were nailed to the ground. But when she took a step, he did too. One step, two steps and before he knew it, he was running. His heart pounded louder as she came closer. Only a few more steps and he could finally wrap her in his embrace. One more step and... SLAP!

A gasp sounded from Paro as Merida's hand came in contact with Hiccup's cheek. The blacksmith's eyes widened in shock and ran his fingers over the now red skin, groaning at the remaining pain.

"I don't think I deserved that" He exclaimed, "what was that for?" He asked. Merida crossed her arms.

"Maireada." She replied bluntly. In the brief moments that the princess had talked to the woman, she had discovered about the escapades Hiccup went on after he told Merida that they couldn't be together.

Hiccup's angry face fell at her reply.

"Ok, I did deserve that." He admitted. Seeing the guilt ridden face, Merida couldn't stay mad at him for long. Letting out another sob of joy, she wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him. To Flynn's whistles and snarky comments, Hiccup embraced her around her waist and pulled her closer to him. They kissed for what felt like an eternity but eventually, they separated, leaning their foreheads against each other.

"Marry me?" Hiccup whispered. Merida giggled.

"Yes." She nodded furiously. With a smile, Hiccup reached into his pocket and pulled out a handmade ring made of iron.

"I made this for you but I didn't want to give it to you until we were out of DunBroch." He explained as he slid ring onto her finger, "Seeing that we are out of DunBroch, you can have it now." He took her hand and placed a gentle kiss on the band.

"I love it." She whispered, admiring the ring. She looked at Hiccup, her husband, "And I love you." Hiccup reached up and cupped her cheek,

"I do too and I swear I'm never leaving you again." As he gave her another kiss, Merida knew that he would keep his promise forever.

****There. They're together again. I'm not so cruel now, am I?***

****Review, favorite, follow.****

44. Epilogue

****Wowâ€¦. It's the last chapterâ€¦.. I can't believe itâ€¦. It's doneâ€¦. ****

****When I started this in April of 2013, I honestly didn't think I'd pass the stats of my first fanfiction and that it'd maybe get just over a hundred reviews. Look where it is now. More than 500 reviews, over 270 followers and over 100,000 views. And I have all of you guys to thank for that. Thank you for everything from the endless love to the crying to the screaming angrily at Artair and William. Thank you, thank you, thank you.****

****Enjoy the last chapter. *wipes away happy tear*****

****Epilogue****

Astrid stood waist deep in the waters that surrounded DunBroch and its forests as the sun began to dip below the mountains. Her eyes were red and swollen but no tears were visible for she had run out of tears to cry. The death of her friends and her allies had taken a hard blow on the woman. She had spent the three days after Snotlout's death locked in her room, eating nothing and barely drinking anything. She had often fallen asleep wearing his cloak, taking in the scent before it would disappear for good. They had forced her out of her solitude because the rituals and preparations of the body for a funeral were complete.

They had stolen a boat from a harbor and had brought it to a bay in the forest that led into the ocean. Snotlout's body was laid on his black cloak, his hands clasped over his heart, his trusty morning star and dagger lying adjacent to him. In Viking culture, a funeral boat was laden with gifts for the deceased to take with them into Valhalla but, their lives had been so humble, they had to steal the goods. A belt, some jewelry, and a brightly colored tunic were among the items they had stolen in order to fill the boat. After the few items were placed, the empty spots were donned with branches of evergreen.

When the boat was ready, Astrid had walked into the water, pushing the vessel with her. She was just able to reach into the boat to lay her hands on top of his cold ones.

"May the Valkyries guide you." She whispered and pushed the boat gently into the bay. She waded back to the shore, her eyes never losing sight of the boat as it slowly floated away. She picked up the bow lying in the grass and lit the arrow on the torch held by Spitelout.

The arrow flew through the air and hit the boat perfect in the bunch of evergreen. Within minutes, a fire was blazing on the boat. The group was completely silent, minus Heather who was saying prayers through her tears, Fionntan's - Fishlegs' arm around her in an awkward attempt of comfort. Astrid looked at him but his face was still hidden underneath the cloak, so it was impossible to tell how he was feeling. She then turned to Spitelout, the old man clearly shattering on the inside while the outside stood tall, proud, and stoic.

They continued to watch the boat, the smoke rising well above the forest canopy. Astrid knew it was dangerous to do but she cared very little for it.

An hour must've passed when the drones of hoof beats were heard behind them. Upon turning, Astrid watched DunBroch soldiers come towards them, a melancholy expression on their faces

"Aileen Fletcher," The leader spoke, "His Majesty wishes to speak with you." The group exchanged looks of confusion. It couldn't be anything good; Astrid was an outlaw, a highwayman, an enemy. She would be killed on the spot. However, these men had come and found her. They hadn't attacked or even made threats, just a request. That already made it seem less threatening.

To make sure it truly wouldn't be a trick, Astrid walked towards them, purposely moving in a way so that the soldiers could see that she had an axe on her hip and a dagger in her boot. To her surprise, they said nothing. The soldiers offered her a horse to ride on but she politely declined because 1) she'd much rather walk and 2) she didn't know how to ride a horse and her pride wanted her to keep her dignity.

Astrid has half expected to hear music and cheers and shouting when they reached the border of the forest but the silence was the same as any other day. As she walked through DunBroch, she was even more stunned to see sadness. Nobody was laughing or even smiling and the wails of crying could be heard in all directions.

"_Their princess is got married_," She thought, "_They should be celebrating. Not mourning._" She didn't ponder on it too long and she quietly continued with the soldiers to the castle.

The air in the castle was even less cheerful than in the town. Everywhere Astrid looked she saw weeping maid and moping lords. If she ever made eye contact with any of them, she didn't receive looks of disgust like she usually does; they just gave her the same moping look.

The soldiers continued to lead her until they reached the throne room, which was only occupied by members of the clans MacIntosh, Dingwall, and MacGuffin and the King and Queen sitting in their thrones, both donned completely in black.

The soldiers closed the door behind Astrid, leaving the woman alone in a room filled with her enemies. Never a follower of decorum, Astrid walked with her head held high towards the king. She stopped by the small set of stairs that led up to the thrones but she didn't bow, whispers rising from the women present in the room. Fergus

seemed indifferent to Astrid's display of disrespect and he made no comment about it either.

"My daughter is dead." Fergus suddenly spoke, casting his eyes back to the ground in order to not let Astrid see the tears that were threatening to fall from his eyes. The Queen however let out a small sob and dapped her tears away with a handkerchief. Astrid raised an eyebrow in confusion; if had expected him to say anything, it hadn't been that.

"Then what am I doing here?" She asked bluntly. After a moment, the King stood up and grabbed a letter from a pouch on his belt and held it up for all to see.

"This was found in my daughter's room." He explained in his booming voice, opening the letter, "In it she offers her reasons for killing Lord William," A gasp came from the room and Astrid's eyes widened. William was dead too? "And the reason she took her own life." He continued to explain all the other contents in her letter, including her secret love affair. "In the last paragraph, she asked me to fulfill one wish so that she may rest in peace." Fergus looked at Astrid, "Her wish was for all the Vikings to go free. And so I decree," His voice boomed so that it could be heard in the farthest corners, "That the search and killing of Vikings ends today. They're all free. If they choose to remain in DunBroch, I guarantee their safety. If they choose to leave, they can do so in peace but the killing ends now!"

Astrid gasped lightly and her knees felt weak as the king spoke. Never had she thought she would see this day, never had she dreamed that she would even live to see it.

They were free. They were all free.

* * *

><p>DunBroch was a sight to behold. As Astrid walked around the village, she watched as Vikings were helped out of their shelter and walked in the remaining sunlight, for some for the first time in years. The aura of the village was both of happiness and sadness as either reunited or mourned.<p>

She had only seen a few familiar faces like that of Camicazi and Bertha but the one she had been most happy to see was that of Gobber. He was overjoyed to see that Astrid, Spitelout and Fishlegs were all still alive but was deeply saddened to know that Hiccup and Stoick were dead too; they had been like family to him.

Astrid was still strolling through the village, smiling at anyone that would smile at her. She stopped in her tracks when she spotted Fishlegs embracing someone, a friend Astrid guessed, but she was surprised to see that he had finally take off his cloak. The man looked back at her, revealing what he had been hiding underneath the cloak. Astrid was unfazed to see the burn scars on his left cheek and part of his throat; she had been there to witness him getting them. They exchanged smiles and Astrid continued her stroll until she reached Spitelout.

He was overlooking all the reunions with a small smile on his face, wishing that Snotlout had been here to witness it all. The two

Vikings stood silently, sometimes exchanging glances before turning their gaze back to the spectacle in front of them.

"What do we do now?" He asked out of nowhere. Astrid knew what he meant. For years they had been hiding and sneaking Vikings out of DunBroch but now there was no more need for it. Astrid and her companions had all been pardoned for their crimes, the killings had stopped and all Vikings were free to go. Astrid contemplated the question before looking up at the elder man.

"Let's go home."

* * *

><p>Scots and Vikings went their separate paths from that day on.

_DunBroch mourned for weeks but eventually found a means to restore and move on. With the loss of Merida, the Fergus decreed that DunBroch would be split equally between the triplets in order to prevent chaos and ruin upon his death. Elinor mourned the longest of all her subjects for she only wore black for the rest of her life. Wanting the world to not forget how much she loved her daughter, she had many tapestries commissioned to portray Merida and her ever wild spirit. After a while, she commissioned even more tapestries but these ones were with the man she loved. _Together in death and together in history_, she stated. _

All the lands that had previously belonged to William came under Christine's possession. With her in power, Artair and CinÃ;ed went into hiding but within days of their disappearance, they were found dead. CinÃ;ed had fallen from a staircase and had broken his neck and Artair was found dead in the slums, his guts wrapped around his throat and crows feasting on his rotting flesh.

Astrid's curse had been fulfilled.

_Astrid sailed back to the Archipelagoes with all the survivors in an attempt to start anew. Instead of splitting up into the eight original tribes, Astrid unified them into one large tribe and, because of her bravery and show of leadership, the Vikings simultaneously selected her to become the chief of the new tribe, a role she humbly accepted. _

Under her leadership, the Vikings entered a period of prosperity often referred to as "The Viking's Golden Age". During this period, Astrid ensured that the story of the blacksmith, the maid, the stable man, and the princess would not be forgotten. Poems were written in their multitude, each telling the story in unique ways. Songs were composed and parents thought of ways to tell the story to their children at night. In secret, Astrid, with the help of Fishlegs, Heather and Spitelout, wrote the events down in a journal in order to ensure that the truth would remain, so that it would not be destroyed for the sake of entertainment. While it wasn't true to the letter, it was the most accurate telling of the story.

_Astrid was an old woman when she finished the last pages of the story. It is said that she stared blankly at the pages for two days, reflecting on her life, everything she had seen, she had felt, what she had lost and what she had found. On the third day, she wrote the

final paragraph, thinking of the friend she had lost so long ago, the man that would live on as the Blacksmith, and the woman he loved, the Princess:_

The love of two souls is far greater than any kind of love. Having loved and lost and still loving until the end of time is the greatest love.

It's true love.

****And that's it folks. The last chapter of **_**Until the End**_**. However, I have a little surprise for you. Seeing that I'm pretty attached to this AU, I'm proud to announce a little something called **_**After the End**_**,****which will contain the alternate ending and one-shots from this AU. The one shots can be anything from before, during, or after the events of UTE. If you guys have any requests, don't hesitate to tell me. *whispers* please request some North and Paroâ€™|. love those two togetherâ€™|.****

****Also, that last little bit in the normal font is not mine. That is from the Bollywood movie **_**Kisna: the Warrior Poet**_**

****Onto the alternate ending and one-shots. See ya guys soon!****

45. AN NOTE 3

Just letting you know, I posted the first part of the alternate ending. It's in the story After the End

End
file.